MOUNT UNION COLLEGE
LIBRARY

Book No. 842.91-R749

Accession No. 33083

Gift of

Fund

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2022 with funding from
Kahle/Austin Foundation

https://archive.org/details/lesleonides0000roma

LES LÉONIDES

LES LÉONIDES

BY

ROMAIN ROLLAND

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY
EUGENE LÖHRKE

NEW YORK

HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY

842.91
R749l

COPYRIGHT, 1929,
BY
HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY, INC.
33088

PRINTED IN THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

PREFACE

The idea for this work dates back thirty years to the dawn of the conception of the long dramatic cycle of which it forms the epilogue.

Three months before that I presented my first play of the Revolution, *Les Loups,* and I began to be visited by the ghost of Danton during the Summer of '98 when I was staying in the Jura Alps above Soleure. It is an old town for which I have a predilection (I am unable to explain it, but I have been happy to hear, since, that Spitteler shares it with me without being any more clear as to the reasons). One night, by starlight, in the midst of the forest, I was dreaming of that great French nobleman who, having taken refuge in Soleure during the revolution, built in the valley of the Verena that beautiful path of the *Ermitage* which is still today one of the attractions of the country:—Baron de Breteuil, former minister of the *Maison du Roi,* one of the great ambassadors of the old régime during its decline.[1]

[1] Louis Auguste Le Tonnelier, Baron de Breteuil (1730-1807), minister to Cologne (1758), to St. Peters-

I imagined the dreams of this noble "*promeneur solitaire,*" a refugee from the madness of his country, hearing day by day of the death of his friends, the ruin of everything he loved, respected and served, trying to hear through the wall of the Jura the march of the new world from which he felt himself debarred, lacking, in that strange country anyone in whom to confide his intimate thoughts, cultivating his garden, expending the unsatisfied ardor of his activity, his useless energy, in a physical struggle with stone and water, mountain and torrent—and, in that silent duel, identifying himself with the eternal laws that move the worlds and rule the universe.

It was the seed from which the whole cycle sprang.[1] Thus the conclusion preceded the beginning and set the pace for the entire work. This simple explanation will tell to my friends more of the spirit of my epic than a whole host of commentators.

A few years later, in 1901-1902, when the

burg (1760), ambassador at Stockholm (1763), at La Haye (1767), at Naples (1771), at Vienna (1774), minister of the *Maison du Roi* (1783-87), emigré at Soleure, then at Hamburg, returning to Paris in 1802.

[1] For *Les Loups,* which was later to form part of it, was born on another occasion: the tragedy of the Dreyfus affair.

"Fourteenth of July" was produced by Gemier —the first mutterings of the thunderstorm—I sketched out the action of the drama which I am now presenting. But the theater being closed to me (it remained so in France until the beginning of that year), I allowed the infant to sleep, to mature for twenty-five years. It has been the same with nearly all my works. With the sole exceptions, I believe, of *Les Loups* and of *Colas Breugnon,* they were almost all conceived a quarter of a century before they came to light. This interminable gestation is a delicious state. All of one's life is passed near the humming of a hive.

This is the last swarming. The reader of "Palm Sunday" will find here two familiar figures: the Count, the son of the Prince, Prince de Courtenay (Conty) in his turn; and the former Member of the Convention, Mathew Regnault. But how changed they are! They are both sixty years old, and the twenty-three years that have passed since the day before Palm Sunday on the terrace of Courtenay, have held more of suffering and learning than a century. The Prince has trod the hard path of exile; and he is of those *fuorusciti*—more numerous than one would believe—with whom

the bread of exile has agreed. For this bread of sorrow they learned to kneed with their own hands. I learned the taste of it myself in the beautiful Memoires of the Emigrés which I have studied, and particularly in the intimate Notes of that valiant chevalier de Pradel de Lamase,[1] who made me love these noble sons of our race, these true Frenchmen, condemned by fate to the most bitter duty of all, that of fighting against the country they cherished (but they could not, without forfeiture, escape from it!), and who for ten years faced the most terrible suffering with head held high, wounded in heart, hungry, smiling, adopting whatever trade seemed to offer without lowering their dignity. And I came to understand the secret affection which bound them, across the Rhine, to the "Patriots" they were fighting. We know too well that it is not possible to bring together these brotherly enemies. But whether they wish it or not, our arms hold them fast, our hands draw them face to face. Brother wolves, bite each other; it is your way of embracing each other! You are of the same blood; your teeth are the same; you are the

[1] Chevalier de Pradel de Lamase: *Notes intimes d'un Emigré,* 1913: *Nouvelles Notes intimes d'un Emigré,* 1914-1920.

same. And you know it, but will not admit it! I will say it for you, obstinate demons!

. . . . .

The fifteen-year-old child, who is the companion of the two heroes of the drama and who forms a link between them, will recall to my readers two other children, his brothers: the little Prince Aërt, and the friend of Jean-Christophe, Olivier. Their common characteristics we may take for granted; they were conceived at the same time, at the turn of two centuries; they are the offspring of those same vague, indecisive hours, before dawn, when Christophe had hardly commenced his journey. Now the river is passed. But I am still faithful to the memory of the young dead that I left on the other shore. The road of my life is lined with their headstones!

. . . . .

As to the setting of the play taken from an exact survey of the place[1] itself, I have re-

[1] I have located the house of the Prince outside of Soleure, at Wenigstein, on the border of the forest on a spur of the first line of hills which encircle the town, a short distance from Verenatal. The cross of the little Jean-Jacques, mentioned in the third act of my play, may still be found in the forest near by, the cross in the form of a four-leaf clover with a date actually two years older (1795).

ceived abundant additional information from the historians of the country.[1] And although I have only been able to keep to the broad general outlines of the local chronicles, I hope that I have preserved the spirit of them.

The ancient town of Soleure, from the time of François I to the fall of the monarchy, was

[1] A whole series of pamphlets by F. Von Arx: *Die Patrioten des Kantons Solothurn im Jahre* 1788, Soleure, 1884; *Die Französischen Emigranten in Solothurn* (1789-1798), Berne, 1892; *Der Einfall der Franzosen in den Kanton Solothurn* (1789-1798), Soleure, 1898; *Aus der Geschichte der französischen Ambassadoren in Solothurn,* Soleure, 1919.

There are also other studies compiled at Soleure of which the most remarkable is the thesis of Kurt Meyer, Ph.D.: *Solothurnische Verfassungszustande zuf Zeit des Patriziates,* Olten, 1921; Gilbert Bloch: *Bilder aus der Ambassadorherrenschaft in Solothurn* (1554-1791) *und der Einfall der Franzosen* (1798), Bienne, 1898: E. Tatarinoff: *Solothurnische Stadt-Neuigkeiten aus dem Ende des achzenhnten Jahrhunderts,* 1910-11, etc.

I have also consulted works of general history: *Geschichte der Schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft* by Johannes Dierauer, Gotha, 1912, and the *Memoires de Barthelemy* (1768-1819), Paris, 1914, the ambassador of France in Switzerland during the entire Revolution until 1797 when he became a Member of the Directorate. I might say that this last book is far from giving all that one would like to hear. Barthelmy appears to me to have played a rather equivocal rôle in the difficult situation in which he found himself; and he continued to maintain a prudent reserve in his Memoires. Prudence (they say) is a virtue in diplomacy. But when it has as a result, as in the case of Barthelmy, the deportation to Sinnamari, it is unfortunate. It would have been just as prudent to have spoken frankly.

the seat of the French embassy in Switzerland. It owes to that circumstance an aristocratic air which still characterizes it today without in the least diminishing its Swiss traits, but rather communicating to them a certain smiling softness, a gentle polish. It is not for nothing that for three centuries it was the host—and the guest as well—at all the fêtes of France splendidly celebrated by our ambassadors, the amused onlooker at the great spectacles of Saint-Louis and the anniversaries or marriages of our Kings, when the foúntains of St. Urs flowed with wine, and gold was scattered lavishly. All these things it continued to enjoy until the hour when the complex whirlwinds of the Constitution sprang up across the Jura. Its conservative and arbitrary narrowness was tempered by an air at once easy-going and good humored.

When the Revolution came, it was a new toy to these old children. But they were cruelly disillusioned. It ruined and despoiled them. All that remained to them was the glow of their monuments, the girdle of the green Aar, the green veil of their meadows lined by their avenues of old trees and the magnificent dreaminess of their horizons where the white

vessel of the Oberland floats on the immense plain.

If I have been compelled, in this work, to compress within extreme limits the Swiss picture in order to re-create two single types from the manifold and motley personnel of the little town, one will find, at least in my settings, some beautiful shells [1] on the sand: the earth, the water and the light. . . . Wherever I live or go they are my true friends and brothers. And the protagonist of the drama which we are to present, is Nature. We are the train of her robe, the curls of her hair, blown in the wind. And the dance of humanity, as Courtenay discovers at the end—what leads it in the revolving Heavens?—it is *the Zauberflöte,* the enchanted flute of the great Fiddler.

ROMAIN ROLLAND.

October 28, 1927.

[1] It might as well be pointed out that the old notary Kulli, sprightly and excitable, who wants to present his town with a nice little Revolution, "in the modern manner," is a product of our country. I have merely presented him with the mock-heroic humors of his colleague, the doctor, Peter Schwendimann. I only hope that they don't start a quarrel on that account in the tomb!

LES LÉONIDES

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

THE PRINCE DE COURTENAY, FRANCOIS-TIMOLEON, Émigré, (the Count of Pauques Fleuries), 58 years old.

THE COUNT OF AVALLON, RENE, Émigré, (the little Vicomte of Paques Fleuries), 33 years old.

MATHEW REGNAULT, Former member of the Convention and of the Committee of Public Safety, Proscribed, 60 years old.

MANON REGNAULT, His adopted daughter, 22 years old.

JEAN-JACQUES REGNAULT, His son, 15 years old.

The Schultheiss,[1] BALTHAZAR WALLIER.

[1] The *Schultheis* (old high German: *Schuldheize,* the equivalent of *tribunus, prefectus, centurion*) was the highest post of honor within the City and Republic of Soleure. He directed the policies of the government, served as foreign minister, and presided at the Council in addition to being Guardian of the Seal. He was elected, for a year, in the Rosengarten, where the *Bourgeoisie Souveraine* assembled on the 24th of June. (The name of the Assembly sprang from the custom of each elector's bringing to it a rose which he carried in his hand.)

Since it is hardly likely that a French comedian could pronounce, or a French public understand, German names, it might be as well to replace the title Schultheiss in the text by that of Syndic, which is a fairly good equivalent.

The same observation applies to the two terms, Grossweibel and Stadtvenner, in the speech of Berry in the

The Notary, Benedict Kulli, 70 years old.

Berry and Chapuis, Valets of the Prince.

Madame Petunier, Housekeeper for the Prince.

The scene is near the Gates of Soleure, and the action takes place between the end of September and the middle of November, 1797.

third act. But in this place it is not only not prohibited, but it is recommended to the actor to murder the two words by pronouncing them in the French manner. Neither the Prince nor his people can bring themselves to pronounce correctly that barbaric language, which appears so ridiculous to them. The Stadtvenner (old high German: *Fahnentrager,* the equivalent of *porte-bannière*) was the military chief of the City. The Grossweibel (old high German: Weibil, the equivalent of Greichtsbote, courrier de justice) served as master of ceremonies.

ACT I

The last of September, 1797.

The court of a farm, before a large building in the beautiful old style of the Bernese Jura; a peasant house with a high, tiled roof and large penthouses. The other side is taken up by the barn and stables. Beyond the wall in the rear and the entrance gate flanked by two old poplars, tufted from the base of their trunks, their crests yellowed by the autumn and the setting sun, the high, somber wall of the Jura rises.

In the middle of the court, where pigeons and chickens are feeding, an antique fountain looms up, with a central pilaster and a number of separate basins, the whole surmounted by a polychrome statue in the fashion prevalent in Soleure. It represents Justice, in a helmet, the eyes bandaged, costumed in the sixteenth-century style, with hips bent in rigid and affected grace, holding a balance, one scale of which is lower than the other.

Scene I

As the curtain rises a sound as of the twittering and chirping of a flock of starlings in flight is in the air and outside the farmyard the voice of the Prince who is returning, singing an air of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (with words by Desportes).

Madame Pétunier comes out of the house and crosses to meet the Schultheiss Balthazar Wallier, who is about to enter. She speaks in turn to the Schultheiss and to the farm hands one of whom is carrying an old gun with which to take a few shots at the starlings.

SCHULTHEISS

(*His nose in the air*)

Whew! What a squall of feathers.

MADAME PETUNIER

Starlings, of course. They have been scared up from the vines by our men coming home.

VOICE OF THE PRINCE

(*Singing, outside*)

Oh, happy one, who still can pass his life
Among his own, free from hate and greed
Amid the fields, the rocks, the woods . . .

SCHULTHEISS

(*After the second line*)

Has the Prince come back?

MADAME PETUNIER

Can't you hear? He's coming now. (*The twittering of the birds and the song continue.*)

SCHULTHEISS

(*Staring up at the tree lined with the starlings*)

They seem to be forming a club up there.

MADAME PETUNIER

We have enough of that sort of thing.

ONE OF THE FARM HANDS

They chirp just like our Luthy and Kulli.

(*The sound of a gun shot is heard from off stage.*)

ANOTHER FARM HAND

(*From off stage*)

I'll bet I can make them dance.

(*The flock of birds disappears in a whirlwind of feathers and squawkings.*)

MADAME PETUNIER

You there! Let them alone. It's been a good year. There's enough for all, beaks as well as mouths.

THE FARM HAND

(*Entering with a smoking gun and two dead starlings*)

They eat and they are eaten.

SCHULTHEISS

That's the common lot.

MADAME PETUNIER

You've got to eat well first, if you want to be good eating.

SCHULTHEISS

Well said! The world is good enough.

THE PRINCE [1]

(*Entering in working clothes, his jacket slung across his shoulders, followed by his working men, still singing*)

"Far from the tumult and the madding crowd . . ."

[1] The Prince is a robust sexagenarian with ruddy skin, white hair, a full neck and well-muscled arms. His voice is strong, jovial, yet commanding.

(*Interrupting his song to reply to the Schultheiss*)

At least it's better than the people in it!

SCHULTHEISS

(*Turning toward the Prince*)

Monseigneur, greeting.

THE PRINCE

Greeting, Schultheiss Wallier. (*Finishing his song*)

"And he who does not sell his liberty to please
The passions of Princes and of Kings . . ."

(*He drops his tools, and repeats in conversational tone.*) . . . The Princes and the Kings . . . Where are they today, the Princes and the Kings?

SCHULTHEISS

Monseigneur, I am looking at one who doesn't seem to be getting along so badly.

THE PRINCE

Oh, yes, if the chest is pillaged, Schultheiss, that means that the chest is good. They have got my property, but they haven't caught me, those robbers over the mountains.

SCHULTHEISS

Still they have pretty long hands.

THE PRINCE

(*Gesturing toward the black mass of the Jura*)

I know it. I can see its shadow, Schultheiss. You'd better close your gates and padlock your doors. The wolves will be roaming around your Swiss sheepfold.

SCHULTHEISS

We are on the watch. But I'm afraid that a few have already slipped in among our dogs and shepherds.

THE PRINCE

The Revolution is like a drop of oil. It spreads. Vaud and Geneva are already touched. Better cut it off before it spreads too far.

SCHULTHEISS

Our Canton is moored safely to its old traditions. The disease of the day hasn't reached here yet. But the danger is close. And that is what I came to talk to you about, Monseigneur.

THE PRINCE

Bad news? I hope it doesn't take our appetites! Madame Pétunier, let's go! Bread and cheese and wine all around. "For better or worse," as our Nestor once said, "I'd just as leave drink from wood as from gold." Fall to, you fellows there! We've earned it. We opened today about a hundred meters of the road across the rock . . .

SCHULTHEISS

Monseigneur, it concerns a new proclamation of the Directory of France.

THE PRINCE

Let it go until later. These clowns! . . . I was telling you about my road in the narrow defile, above the torrent. The cliff is steep. We broke three picks on the rocks this afternoon. The swollen torrent carried away the bridge we just built . . . Never mind. I'll tunnel through that mountain.

SCHULTHEISS

One marvels, sir, at the sight of a great Prince passing his time as an excavator.

THE PRINCE

You have to use your strength or your strength will use you. Since there are no men to fight, I fight stones. And I like the woods and the water more than anything else. They are beautiful. They calm one's spirit. They make one forget those mischievous monkeys, the human race. (*The workmen are already seated. The Prince, on finishing, goes across to the fountain. He washes his face and neck vigorously, singing at the same time:*)

"I love the voice of the noisy fountains
Rushing from far-off rocks
To water our fruitful plains . . ."

(*He returns toward the Schultheiss.*) To water our own pastures, Schultheiss, we have something better. A bottle of our sparkling wine. (*They sit down.*)

(*During the scene that follows the sun sets behind the Jura. The light fades gradually from the courtyard and around the fountain, lingering on the summits.*)

SCHULTHEISS

Monseigneur, you hold no ill will toward that curious creature whose song you were singing?

THE PRINCE

Toward that madman? I can assure you, gentlemen, there was a time when I would have piped another tune to his good riddance.

SCHULTHEISS

We could have done without him quite as easily.

THE PRINCE

But even madmen have their hour of reason. At least I owe to his fanaticisms the knowledge of how to use my arms and my ten fingers. Yes, it is thanks to Jean-Jacques that I shoe my horses myself, like St. Eloi, and that my son works with his hands like Philopoemen. We learned our lessons in the blackest days of exile, when even bread failed. We are ready for anything now, fair weather or foul. "Emile" has saved us. It wasn't done purposely. But the intention doesn't matter, it's the success I'm thinking of. And as to the author, if he spoke nonsense, at least it was in good French. And good French is always good. It tastes best of all abroad. I leave the fool to his follies. The best wine is not necessarily the most temperate. In my cellar in France, I still cling to a few bottles of Rousseau.

SCHULTHEISS

Personally, I prefer this kind.

THE PRINCE

That! Well, let's get on to your bad news.

SCHULTHEISS

Monseigneur, you know with what tenacity the Republic of France pursues her émigrés on our soil.

THE PRINCE

I know, and instead of answering her like William Tell with the cross-bow, your great Canton of Berne bows, with hat off, to the Mandarins of Paris.

SCHULTHEISS

Monseigneur, you know yourself that until this day we have opened our doors to you. The Confederation has been able for four years to meet the demands on it, by a policy of evasion. A reply in the ancient manner would, without doubt, have been more glorious. But our small state of middle classes and peasants, surrounded like an island by an ocean of enemies, has the right to put reason ahead of valor. We are isolated here, with the furies around us. The best part of wisdom lies—does it not?—

not in provoking or opposing them, not even in discussing matters with them, but simply in waiting until they destroy themselves, at least to gain the time we need.

THE PRINCE

Time only works for those, Schultheiss, who can manage to work without it. Those large-scale robbers of the Convention recognized this, and they grasped at it every moment as if there were never going to be a tomorrow. They were right. You, you wait, sitting around your old Helvetian oak; you seem to expect that the hurricane that is tearing down the trees on the mountains will spare you. It is quite old, that oak of yours, you know, pretty well hollowed out by time and the spirit of the age. Watch out that, after the protecting circle of the wind-brakes fall, the oak doesn't fall too.

SCHULTHEISS

It has managed to hold pretty well so far. . . . But we have more need for wisdom than ever before. One has to admit that our calculations were wrong. Instead of wearing itself out, the violence seems to be redoubling. It was half a year ago that the good M. Bar-

thelemy, the ambassador of France, who supported us in Catimini against the furious mobs of Paris, left us. When he was recalled to be a member of the Directory, who was there who didn't suppose that a quieter state of things was coming and that gradually more moderate men would turn toward the tranquillity of the past? Who was there to tell us that after three months these same moderates would be imprisoned, hunted down and deported, by a new reign of terror, and that the balance of power would swing back to the lowest elements without a counterpoise?

THE PRINCE

For my part, I say bravo!

SCHULTHEISS

Monseigneur, you do not mean that.

THE PRINCE

Bravo, by God. And I'll repeat it. . . . Carnot hunted down by Barras; Carnot the master headsman, forced to save his own head. And your Barthelemy deported to Sinnamari. I could split my sides with laughing. Yes, I find it a priceless joke that these monsters should start eating each other. And if it were

left to me to choose, I'd see to it that these moderate men of yours were the first to be eaten; these Girondins, Liberals, hypocrites, these idiots who thought that the beast could be unmuzzled with impunity; these pathetic gentlemen, who with their hands on their hearts voted for death, death, death with long faces, robbing their victims while they bathed them in their tears and nationalized their estates in order to walk away with them; these idealists, these careful men with a foot in each camp . . . And your "good" M. Barthelemy, that acrobat of diplomacy who for seven years succeeded in keeping his balance on the tight rope by serving and betraying, in the same breath, France and Switzerland, the fugitives and the brigands . . . Such people defend us, you say? I wouldn't want to be defended by anyone who is not the enemy of my enemies. Give me a true friend or a true enemy. But these others —I'd rather have a sincere executioner, an out-and-out rascal, than one of these pious geldings.

SCHULTHEISS

Then, I take it, you'll welcome the news that you are to have a thorough-going Jacobin, a real regicide, for a neighbor.

THE PRINCE

What's that?

SCHULTHEISS

A former member of the Convention. I forget his name. Renaud, Vergniaud . . . no, it isn't that . . . At any rate one of those members of the Convention and National Assembly who went around, not long ago, calling themselves Democrats. Proscribed in his own town, he came up here to our mountains with his family looking for shelter—like you.

THE PRINCE

I hope you don't intend to inflict one of those scoundrels on me.

SCHULTHEISS

It's no fun for me. But as long as they don't interfere with law and order I have to put up with them. Besides, the man is old and sick. He's not dangerous any more.

THE PRINCE

You don't understand that breed. I tell you their poison is fatal. Their rages are never appeased. Like so many scorpions, you have

to draw around them circles of fire so that they may turn their poison against themselves.

SCHULTHEISS

Well, it should be interesting to watch. He won't speak a word, he won't make a gesture that won't be observed.

THE PRINCE

Where has he dug his hole?

SCHULTHEISS

He put up at the Hotel Faucon, in town, for a while. But in order to keep him isolated from the population we are going to install him, after tomorrow, on a farm behind St. Niklaus.

THE PRINCE

At my very doorstep! This is an outrage!

SCHULTHEISS

He won't be there long. We expect a new ultimatum within a day or two from the Directory. That is what I came to tell you about. I have been informed that an order is on the way from Paris to Bern ordering that all the

emigrants be turned out of Switzerland. The order should be transmitted to us by the Federal Government shortly. In our Canton, where we have remained faithful to the old principles, we are going to be as deaf to it as possible. If a time comes when it is no longer possible to be entirely deaf, we may pledge our obedience by expelling the Jacobins, ignoring the others. Thus we will be able to protect you again. But don't show yourself around too much. Don't go into the city. Remain in your fields. For we have to reckon with the spies scattered throughout the country by the emissaries of the Directory, the insolent riff-raff of this wolf of a Reubel.

THE PRINCE

Schultheiss, when I see a wolf I shoot it.

SCHULTHEISS

We'll have to treat this rascal with caution. These long-toothed animals are devouring, at our very doors, the granaries of Lombardy and the least imprudence would turn them against us with the young tiger who leads them in their foraging.

THE PRINCE

Bonaparte . . . Schultheiss, which do you suppose is the maddest, to arm oneself against a tiger or to try to tame it?

SCHULTHEISS

We are not looking for trouble. But if it comes, we will be ready.

THE PRINCE

"Will be," the eternal phrase of those who *are* not. But after all, it is your business.

SCHULTHEISS

Yours also, Monseigneur.

THE PRINCE

My business at present is to cultivate my fields. That is the only field of action left to me. My king is dead. My world is dead. I have given up all thoughts of a future. My only desire is to finish my road through the valley, and to see that our autumn sowing may bring joy to the lark of next summer.

SCHULTHEISS

I can wish you a good harvest!

THE PRINCE

But you don't believe I'll have one. Well, well, I see what you are driving at, Schultheiss. But whether I harvest these fields or not, I can at least be certain that my son and I have sown them. What I have done, I have done. That at least can't be denied me.

SCHULTHEISS

But tell me, monseigneur, what is the object of all your work?

THE PRINCE

I might ask you, in turn, why do you eat?

SCHULTHEISS

You jest.

THE PRINCE

Frenchmen cannot live on bread alone. They have need for action. . . . Greeting, young man.

Scene II

(*The Count enters the farmyard, mounted on a huge plow-horse. He is a little over thirty, well built, with a thoughtful air.*)

THE COUNT

Greeting.

THE PRINCE

Up before the sun, and back again after him.

THE COUNT

The sowing is finished.

SCHULTHEISS

Hard day!

THE COUNT

(*Taking a drink at the fountain*)

"He who sows good wheat helps the good God in his work."

THE PRINCE

He needs a lot of help. He's a bad worker, in my estimation. If I had the time, Schultheiss, I would make that land over again, I would cut canals, drain the swamps, and build roads all around the mountains. I can't look at a place without imagining what it might be—might be, that is, if I got to work on it. I see the fields populated, boats on the rivers, wagons on the roads, cities veiled in smoke. Not an inch of earth should remain idle. Not a single

creature—man or beast—who wasn't busy. That is their only justification. To live, one must work. A curse on the sleepy-heads!

SCHULTHEISS

Monseigneur, it is a good thing that the French haven't the world in their control. For if God came down again to visit, he wouldn't recognize the face of Nature around him.

THE PRINCE

Nature has been handed over to us so that we can transform her.

SCHULTHEISS

You aren't so different, after all, from your enemies, the Jacobins. They want to reform men, and you want to reform the earth.

THE PRINCE

Eh? Well, there may be some truth in what you say. . . . But our particular form of mania, at least, has no dangers for you.

SCHULTHEISS

On the contrary, it means money in our pockets. My only wish, Monseigneur, is that you may be spared a long time to us.

(*During this last conversation, the Schultheiss takes his leave and the Prince walks with him to the gate. Exit Schultheiss. While the Prince is still exchanging a few words with the Schultheiss in the rear, the two servants of the Prince begin talking together as before.*)

CHAPUIS

Did you hear that, Berry? That dog of a Jacobin tracking us. . . . Staying at the Hotel Faucon, that vampire, that king-killer. Ought we to allow such smoke as that around our house? Come on, I tell you! I'm going to send that dog off with his tail between his legs.

BERRY

Where are you going?

CHAPUIS

Through his windows, to sing a bit of a song to him. The words will set him slobbering all over himself. I hope they choke him!

BERRY

Let's be off, then!

(*They run out.*)

Scene III

(*The Prince returns from the gate of the court toward the house. He jerks his thumb back over his shoulder toward the disappearing Schultheiss, and says ironically to the Count:*)

THE PRINCE

He knows perfectly well—just as well as I do—that we are going to be politely requested to get out.

THE COUNT

Do you think so, father?

THE PRINCE

And you, do you suppose they've got courage enough to keep us for any length of time against the threats of our enemies?

THE COUNT

It would suit me first rate, for all that, to hold on here in this stronghold guarded by the powerful walls of the mountains a bit more securely than the old ramparts of Vauban—(*he indicates the black chain of the Jura, dominating the horizon*)—escarpments bristling with

rocks concealed in the woods and crowning their salients with battlements.

(*The two men have seated themselves on the stone bench resting against the house. The long afternoon fades into twilight during the act.*)

THE PRINCE

That's true, of course: a shell like that can defy all sorts of attacks. It looks like the skeleton of some monster born in the days of the Creation. But it's nothing but a shell. Where could the life have gone to?

THE COUNT

It is asleep in the dead earth. I'll take it on myself to rouse it. The race is strong, but leaders are lacking. If I only had the men, I would organize them right enough. I'd make an army as solid as the Jura to close the way to invaders.

THE PRINCE

I'd trust you as well as the next man, my Colonel. But after all, there's no one to ask such action of you. They don't want your knowledge and your skill. They don't want to be guided or saved by us—no more here in

Switzerland than in Germany, England or Austria—wherever we go, gentlemen of France, offering in vain our arms, our ideas, our knowledge and our blood. They want nothing at all to do with us. They suspect us. They prefer defeat to allowing us to share in the victory. They are afraid of us.

THE COUNT

Oh, the misery of those years when we consumed ourselves in the army of Condé, fettered, our hands bound by our false allies—seeing clearly what should be done, able to do it, and forbidden to—kept in the rear guard of the troops of Brunswick, helping, powerlessly, in the ravaging of our France by those bands of knaves, with rage in our hearts, forbidden either to march against them or before them to save our king, compromised and betrayed—and when they marched back again, cut to pieces to protect the retreat of those we would gladly have thrown ourselves upon! . . .

THE PRINCE

They played a double rôle. They had no serious intention of stopping the Revolution.

They let it eat into the very entrails of France so that later they might be able to cut her to pieces. They lost their trick! And even if we lost with them, it is better than if they had won.

THE COUNT

Yes, one is often much nearer to the enemy one kills than to an ally.

THE PRINCE

Once the frontier is passed, everything is lukewarm and indifferent. One only lives half a life. No one in Europe knows as well as we do the fury of our people, the devouring flame that drives their bedevilled armies about the world. The rest don't count. They will be swept up.

THE COUNT

If you think that, father, what are we to do?

THE PRINCE

Wait until we are eaten up.

THE COUNT

When the storm is over, do you think it will be possible to reconstruct the past?

THE PRINCE

The past *is* passed. The ancient order is destroyed. The France that we have known will never rise again from its ruin.

THE COUNT

Well, what do you look for, then?

THE PRINCE

Nothing. Just like the song, "Belle Philis!" For thirty years I have been looking things pretty clearly in the face. I have never hesitated to use my sword where it should be used. Admitting that destiny and the march of events have gone counter to my wishes, I still see no good reason why I should accept such a destiny. My wishes also are predestined. And I could build you an entire structure of beautiful reasons to show you that if my actions have contradicted my judgment, it has been logically. But what does it matter whether I contradict myself or not? I'd rather tell you outright that between action and judgment I never hesitate at all: I act. That belongs more in the tradition—mine and yours. Let come what will come! I'm not responsible for what happens. If only the field were free for action, I

wouldn't complain at all. But one steps on one's own toes here if one so much as moves in this confined space where the mountains shut one in like the walls of a prison. Often enough I feel like a horse with his feet tied. The fire of action simply smoulders in one's heart. One fries in one's own fat . . . Well, it doesn't matter. The flame burns straight without wavering. As long as I live, it will also live, the spirit of Royal France for ten centuries; blocking the road for the New World, shouting "no" to the intruders.

THE COUNT

That's not enough for me, that "no." . . . Excuse me, father. I admire your energy, and I am not one wit behind you in my desire to hold out. But I prefer a "yes" to a "no." To burn in one's own fire for nothing—that's not good enough. If the past is dead, one must get along without it and open up a new way to the future. Not simply rest on the ruin. Keep on going, begin again. Why? I don't know. But I don't intend to spend my time immortalizing lost battles. Our race lies in us. If the Old World is destroyed, if it is true that our old order cannot renew itself again, I'm not going

to weep over our lost privileges. I intend to win some new ones, with the plow and the sword.

THE PRINCE

Where? Perhaps with the barefoot bands of the Corsican who won his general's brevet on the couch of Barras' daughter?

THE COUNT

In the old days, so I am told, the king's couch gave out the same privileges without anyone finding fault with it— But let that go! Even if Bonaparte has gloriously washed away the stain of that woman in blood and laurels, the place for a Courtenay is not in the ranks of those who in the name of world freedom set out to destroy the world and pillaged Italy in order to fill the coffers of a few robbers in Paris.

THE PRINCE

I don't believe there is any room left in the world for a Courtenay.

THE COUNT

As long as there is a Courtenay left there are a couple of arms to make some.

THE PRINCE

We have been shuffled aside by the march of events.

THE COUNT

One age succeeds another. We will find another where we can get back our own again. After all, we are made of durable stuff.

THE PRINCE

(*Indicating the Jura*)

Like that over there, that old mountain, the sullen Jura. It could tell you something about the past.

THE COUNT

Its immobility fatigues me. I have a notion, at times, to shout out "Get along there!" I am smothered, at night, behind that curtain. It gives me a fever.

THE PRINCE

There's plenty of air, none the less!

THE COUNT

It's sharp enough, that's true. And I love the north wind when it blows through the forests. The body has nothing to complain of.

One draws in breath enough. But it's another kind of air that the spirit craves. I feel, at times, like you, shut in behind these barriers. One tugs at the cord that binds one to the stake. It's hard to know what to do with one's energy. There's too much of it. Instead of turning up the earth, one longs to raise those rocks to get a little comfort out of the effort.

THE PRINCE

Let us cultivate our fields. They are the most satisfactory confidantes. Everything that one cannot say or do, defeats itself; one can confide to the earth and take vengeance on her. She is the sad sufferer. And she never complains. She knows too well that she will have the last word.

THE COUNT

By patience, I am her master. From the very dawn I breath her in. Night comes. Repose for her and for us. Dawn again, and we must begin our labor and trouble anew. Whether it is a field or a kingdom one must do what one has in hand and do it well.

(*He has risen as though to enter the house. At that moment the loud barking of a dog, outside the walls of the farm, is heard.*)

THE COUNT

Who could be coming here at such an hour?

THE PRINCE

Probably some roving spy.

(*Voice of Mathew Regnault, outside.*)

Ah, you beasts! You would attack passers-by, would you?

(*The barking is suddenly cut off, changing into howls of pain, then begins again murderously. The Count walks over to the gate of the court, whistling to his dog to call him off.*)

THE COUNT

The accent is good.

THE PRINCE

The voice, also. It's a French one.

THE COUNT

Come here, Briffaut! (*He goes through the gate to meet the visitor.*) Who are you, sir? Are you wounded?

Scene IV

(*Mathew Regnault appears just outside the gate.*)

REGNAULT

Is this Swiss hospitality?

THE COUNT

Here is the threshold. Friends within. Arms outside. What do you want?

REGNAULT

The white house of Wenigstein.

THE COUNT

This is it.

REGNAULT

I want to see the master.

THE COUNT

Come in.

(*He steps aside to allow Regnault to pass. The latter appears in view on the threshold in the last rays of the sunset. The Prince, having risen, watches him approaching from the center of the courtyard. Mathew Regnault draws closer. He is a broken giant. Huge,*

but wasted, with heavy shoulders, livid in color, his huge head hanging as if his neck were too weak to support it. His jerky footsteps lack firmness. In the dim light he holds out his arms as if to ward off some obstacle, for his great night-bird's eyes are filmed and his enormous hands, working feverishly, form a sharp contrast to his emaciated wrists.)

REGNAULT

Where is he, the wretch?

(*He starts forward, like one beside himself, but stumbles on a rock. The Prince steps forward quickly as though to support the visitor who recovers his balance without him.*)

THE PRINCE

(*Courteously*)

The paving is rough and treacherous at this time of day. I hope you haven't injured yourself, sir?

REGNAULT

(*Regarding the Prince hostilely. His anger has vanished.*)

Thank you. Where is your master?

(*For he mistakes the Prince for a farmer.*)

THE PRINCE

(*Calmly*)

I am the master.

REGNAULT

(*Dumbfounded; then wrathful again*)

So it's you. It's you who set your servants on me to insult me.

THE PRINCE

(*Coldly*)

May I ask what you are talking about?

REGNAULT

At the Hotel du Faucon, just after I arrived . . .

THE PRINCE

(*Cutting him off with a gesture of disgust*)

Ah! You are . . .

REGNAULT

(*Without noticing either his words or his gesture continues*)

. . . My family and myself, sick, overcome with fatigue, hunted down . . . At least we expected one hour of repose in this strange land from the furies of our own. Your disreputable

servants stirring up the dregs of the town, on the public square, with vile songs, under my daughter's window . . .

THE PRINCE

(*Angrily*)

The fools! Who told you that they were mine?

REGNAULT

I collared one of them. He called himself Berry. He said that he came from you.

THE PRINCE

(*Dashing his great stick against the pavement*)

I'll have it out of their hides!

REGNAULT

It wasn't you who put them up to it, then?

THE PRINCE

I am the injured party, sir. I beg you to forgive an insult that reflects on me.

REGNAULT

It is up to me then to excuse myself for the time and manner of my visit. I have still to introduce myself.

THE PRINCE

I will save you that trouble, sir. I know who you are. I haven't the slightest desire to know you better.

REGNAULT

What do you know of me?

THE PRINCE

I know that you represent all that I detest most in the world. The City notified me, only a moment ago, that from tomorrow on we are to be neighbors. There's no use in concealing my regret over the prospect—I would say, my disgust, if you didn't happen to be my guest at the moment. But my desires in the matter hardly count. I myself am here as a guest of the Swiss; and I have no right to refuse their hospitality to others. The world is big enough for all of us. Do me the great favor of trying to avoid me for the future in this life—and the next.

(*He turns his back.*)

REGNAULT

(*Regarding him with his fixed and troubled eyes, then shrugs his shoulders and turns to*

depart. He speaks with an accent of contempt.)

I can answer you, anyway, in the flesh. As for our corpses, I'll consign them to the earth. The earth, fortunately, hasn't any nose. She can't distinguish between them.

THE PRINCE

The grave! Worthy symbol of your stinking Equality!

REGNAULT

(*Coming half-way back, and throwing his defiance over his shoulder*)

We shall manage to pass the rolling pin over the Princes and the Kings.

THE PRINCE

(*Scornfully, ironically*)

You?

REGNAULT

I or the others, what does it matter?

THE PRINCE

(*In the same tone of voice*)

The others? I suppose you mean those who have already rolled over you?

REGNAULT

You needn't remind me of my badge of "proscribed." I happen to be proud of it.

THE PRINCE

I was at one time, myself. But I've had a change of heart since it was passed on to you.

REGNAULT

(*Turning suddenly and walking back to look at him more closely*)

You proscribed? Émigré? (*Harshly.*) I know who you are.

THE PRINCE

(*Who has also come back*)

That voice. . . .

REGNAULT

Those features. . . .

(*The two men, face to face, study each other.*)

THE PRINCE

We have come together at last, face to face.

REGNAULT

Enemies, now as always.

THE PRINCE

Your face tells me nothing. But that insolent glance—I have seen it.

REGNAULT

Like the clash of knife-blades, your glance and mine . . . A long time has passed; but nothing of it is lost . . . Wait . . . I remember now. It was on the terrace of the Château of Courtenay.

THE PRINCE

(*Stepping back involuntarily, but recovering himself at once*)

You are . . . ? (*He studies his face with a shade of pity in his glance.*) You have changed!

REGNAULT

Regnault, Mathew Regnault . . . Yes. We are the same age. But I am older than you.

THE PRINCE

(*Harshly, coldly, indicating the hanging head of the man before him*)

Your crimes weigh you down.

REGNAULT

(*Raising his head*)

I am not of those who carry their heads lightly . . . Let us not speak of blood . . . There are blood stains on both of us.

(*There is a moment of silence.*)

THE PRINCE

(*Frowning and regaining his aloof and contemptuous disdain*)

But perhaps, sir, you could give me some news of Courtenay. You seem to have been forced to give up in your turn (quite a comedy, in fact) my properties which you confiscated in the name of the nation . . . At the very least, I am curious to know whether or not I can still claim my own name. For while you were there you might just as well have taken over the title with the Château and made yourself Mathew de Regnault—Courtenay!

REGNAULT

(*Returning scorn for scorn*)

I haven't fallen so low as to envy you your name. I prefer my own. And as for your pillage, I haven't touched it. It belongs to the nation. Go back and claim it!

THE PRINCE

Then, Master Popelin, your uncle—you see I am well posted—after having swallowed it up, didn't pass it on to you after all?

REGNAULT

That land of yours breeds misfortune. I have never held it. My hands have taken nothing that they haven't made themselves. But to wipe out from that old stone lair the evil memories of a vanished race, we turned it over to the people: we installed in the main building a regional school of arts and crafts: in one of the wings an orphan asylum, and in the other a home for aged workers. The woods were cut down, the works of art were sold to pay the armies who beat you. And so, as you see, nothing has been lost after all.

THE PRINCE

Before listening to you, I could still picture to myself Courtenay living. Now, *Requiem*. It is dead. And you are the murderer. After all, I'd rather hear that it was dead than polluted by some *sansculotte*.

REGNAULT

(*Returning insult for insult*)

And still I managed to get away with your brother's widow.

THE PRINCE

(*Taken by surprise*)

My brother was never married.

REGNAULT

If you prefer, the mother of his child.

THE PRINCE

Who?

REGNAULT

His name would mean nothing to you. The great ones have no time for such trifles.

THE PRINCE

(*Calmly*)

I live with simple people now.

REGNAULT

(*Brutally*)

You are the one that profits, not they.

THE PRINCE

(*In the same tone—absently*)

Perhaps . . . My brother had a son, then?

REGNAULT

A daughter. Today she is mine. I have adopted her. I married the mother, and I have a son as well. Both of them are here with me.

THE PRINCE

And the mother?

REGNAULT

She is dead.

THE PRINCE

(*Interested despite himself*)

How old is your daughter?

REGNAULT

Just the number of years—if your brother had survived—which have been denied him.

THE PRINCE

She is twenty-three, then.

REGNAULT

You have a good memory. (*He still preserves his aggressive tone even when the Prince speaks mildly.*)

THE PRINCE

And she is here?

REGNAULT

I left her at the hotel with her young brother. He is sick. His health has forced me to remain in this town rather longer than suits my convenience—and yours as well. But I have annoyed you too long with my presence. Goodbye.

THE PRINCE

(*Who has drawn closer to him gradually, laying a hand on his arm*)

Wait a moment! . . . It must have been difficult, that flight across these mountains, with the young girl and sick child.

REGNAULT

(*Astonished at the gesture and the question*)

What does it matter to you?

THE PRINCE

(*Motioning him commandingly to a seat on the stone bench close to the door of the house. Regnault, paying heed only to the Prince's words, sits down without thinking what he is doing.*)

If you have need of him, I can send you to Doctor Schwendimann.[1] He is considered pretty good. I speak impartially. He is no friend of mine. He shares your opinions.

REGNAULT

Thank you.

(*Both of them remain seated, a little distance apart on the bench, without speaking. Then Regnault notices the Count, leaning against the rim of the fountain in the middle of the court. Smoking his pipe, he has remained motionless and silent, listening to the conversation.*)

REGNAULT

And who is that over there listening to us and talking to his pipe?

THE PRINCE

That is my son.

REGNAULT

I know him, then. I saw him when he was a child—the pupil of the Philosopher.

[1] I might point out again that the Prince pronounces all foreign words in the French manner with utter indifference as to whether he mangles them or not.

THE COUNT

(*Without leaving his place*)

I recognized you the moment you came in. Weren't you a short time ago with Moreau, opposite Fribourg, on the Rhine?

REGNAULT

(*Proudly*)

I passed by there. Yes, I was one of the Commissioners of the army.

THE COUNT

We were on the other side. We crossed swords at Offenburg.

REGNAULT

You put up a good fight.

THE COUNT

You did well yourselves. Even while we were killing them, we were proud of the sons of our peasants . . . Do you remember those parleys, along the river, from one bank to the other, between the two camps?

REGNAULT

Yes, the voices carried well across the water.

THE COUNT

And the laughter of France!

REGNAULT

When our swords were resting, the battle of tongues went on, like the heroes of Homer.

THE COUNT

Do you remember when one of your men—you were there—called us "slaves of the tyrants," and when someone on our side . . .

REGNAULT

(*Breaking in*)

Yes, I remember . . . threw the words back, shouting "free men, who is the most free." Someone called: "Long live the King." And someone else shouted: "Long live the Nation."

THE COUNT

That was I.

REGNAULT

What were you fighting for, then?

THE PRINCE

(*Calmly*)

The Nation. We are the Nation.

THE COUNT

(*With a smile*)

I might add that we were not always sorry when you succeeded in giving our allies a thrashing.

REGNAULT

Ah, if we had been working together the Republic might have conquered the world.

THE PRINCE

(*Calmly and firmly*)

No. The king, rather.

THE COUNT

(*Shrugging*)

Neither gives an inch. That's the way with life.

REGNAULT

(*Rising*)

No, with death.

THE PRINCE

(*Self-possessed*)

It's all the same. (*He watches the uncertainty of Regnault's footsteps.*) One of my people will take you back, sir.

REGNAULT

(*Recovering himself*)

I don't need a guardian.

THE PRINCE

It is dark already and it will be nightfall before you get out of the forest.

REGNAULT

I can manage to find my way.

THE PRINCE

Good-bye, sir.

REGNAULT

Good-bye.

(*The two men exchange a cold, formal bow. The Prince remains seated near the threshold of the house. The Count walks with Regnault to the gate of the court and opens it. He bows and Regnault nods without a word.*)

Scene V

The Count walks back toward his father and sits down on the stone bench beside him. They both smoke silently, watching the stars.

THE COUNT

(*Pointing to the moon rising slowly behind the dark barrier of the Jura—half aloud*)

At this same hour, it is rising behind the woods at Courtenay and the dark ponds are gleaming like white diamonds.

(*Silence.*)

THE PRINCE

(*Half aloud*)

In spite of everything, something of the past has returned. (*The barking of the dog bursts out furiously again. The cry of a young girl is heard.*)

THE PRINCE

Someone else is coming. This seems to be an evening of unlooked-for visits.

(*The Count has risen and walks rapidly to the gate.*)

THE COUNT

(*Calling into the darkness*)

Don't be afraid. The dog is tied up.

(*He opens the gate.*)

Scene VI

(*A young girl enters. She is tall and well formed, with yellow hair, light blue eyes,*

fresh, simply dressed in the fashion of the day, with an Indian shawl drawn over her beautiful bare shoulders. She has with her a young boy of about fifteen, very blonde, frail, with a sickly air: Manon Regnault and her brother, Jean-Jacques. They appear to be frightened, and cling close together. Although he is trembling and out of breath, the young boy seems to have taken his sister under his protection. He cannot speak.)

(*The Count bows to Manon, and the Prince rises.*)

THE COUNT

I hope you will excuse our noisy guardian.

MANON REGNAULT

(*Her voice still trembling*)

Is my father here?

THE COUNT

You are Mademoiselle Regnault?

THE PRINCE

(*Crossing in front of her*)

Your father was here. He has just gone.

(*The two children seem to be uneasy.*)

MANON

Ah! Heaven knows—we tried to stop him. We ran after him, but we did not know the country; people don't understand our language. We lost our way . . . What has happened to him?

THE PRINCE

(*Pleasantly*)

We have just been talking together.

MANON

My father is so violent . . . I am afraid. . . . Excuse me.

THE PRINCE

Your father was a little irritated. He had a right to be. So was I when I heard about the abuse that some rascal showered on him in my name—an infamous affront.

MANON

(*Reassured*)

Oh! I was so afraid! . . . And this child here, especially. (*She indicates her brother.*)

JEAN-JACQUES REGNAULT

(*Still breathless, with an affected indignation*)

I am no longer a child. (*He can scarcely catch his breath.*)

MANON

(*Tenderly*)

You are my child . . . (*To the Prince.*) My brother, Jean-Jacques. He is sick. He was in bed. He insisted on getting up and following me. And we ran and ran . . . Look, he is worn out . . .

THE PRINCE

He is perspiring. He must have a fever. . . . Come into the house.

THE COUNT

You, too, Mademoiselle, you are trembling. After all your fatigue, this is too much of a strain for the day of your arrival. Rest a little.

MANON

No, I cannot. I must find my father. Where is he?

THE COUNT

He just left the moment you arrived. You should have met him.

THE PRINCE

He must have lost his way, just as I feared, at one of the turnings.

MANON

(*Frightened again*)

Ah! He couldn't find the path after dark. His sight is failing. And he is reckless. He might fall, hurt himself. I must run after him.

JEAN-JACQUES

I'm going with you.

MANON

No, no, Jean-Jacques, I don't want you to. That is too much. It's bad enough to have brought you here. You can hardly stand up . . . Look, he is going to fall.

THE PRINCE

(*Who has been watching the two children and especially the young boy closely, takes hold of him firmly but affectionately*)

He's going to stretch out here for a while,

while you look for your father. My son will consider it an honor to act as your escort.

JEAN-JACQUES

(*Tries to break away and follow his sister*)

No, no. I won't . . .

THE PRINCE

(*Holding him close on the bench*)

Your father must be quite near by. They will bring him back in a moment. Are you afraid to keep me company for a little while?

JEAN-JACQUES

(*In a low voice, timidly*)

No, monsieur.

THE PRINCE

Now then, stretch out there. The September nights are warm. But just to be sure (you are quite damp) let's wrap this cape around your legs. . . . (*He gets a cushion and puts it under the child's head.*) There now, are you comfortable?

(*Manon and the Count have already gone out. Their voices are heard for a moment coming from the forest.*)

Scene VII

JEAN-JACQUES

(*Lying on the bench*)

Monsieur, I am confused. (*After a pause, timidly.*) You don't hate me?

THE PRINCE

Why should I hate you? (*The child does not reply.*) Do you know who I am?

JEAN-JACQUES

Yes, I know.

THE PRINCE

Who told you?

JEAN-JACQUES

My mother. She spoke to me often of Courtenay.

THE PRINCE

Who was she?

JEAN-JACQUES

The daughter of the gardner.

THE PRINCE

Huchette?

JEAN-JACQUES

That is what they called her.

THE PRINCE

Huchette! The little rose! . . . So she was your mother. Now I understand . . . Your sister looks like her.

JEAN-JACQUES

And I?

THE PRINCE

No. . . . It's curious . . . There's someone else . . . But I should think your mother would have remembered sad things of Courtenay.

JEAN-JACQUES

Sad or gay, the memories were dear to her.

THE PRINCE

And there was no one that she spoke of with hatred?

JEAN-JACQUES

She was incapable of hatred . . . Oh, we have had our fill of hatred, these terrible years.

THE PRINCE

You were in Paris from the beginning of the troubles?

JEAN-JACQUES

Until a short time ago. . . . I was twelve years old when I saw the head of a woman carried through the street on a pike surrounded by dancing urchins of my own age. The wind had loosened the hair, and the blue lips were nibbling a lock of it.

THE PRINCE

You probably had one of the front row seats. Your father was one of the heroes of the spectacle.

JEAN-JACQUES

My father had no time to even see it. He was caught up in the struggle. The struggle against his enemies. The struggle against his friends. A struggle to extermination. It was like a furious storm. . . . But we, my mother and I, had no part in it. Still we could not escape the sounds of it. We would have gladly blocked our ears. The cries never stopped. We closed the shutters and drew the curtains and kneeled together before the Mother of

Heaven. But still I heard the raging and roaring along that street . . .

THE PRINCE

You prayed, you say?

JEAN-JACQUES

My mother was very religious, and brought us up in her faith.

THE PRINCE

And your father knew it? That destroyer of churches!

JEAN-JACQUES

My father knew it. Mother had placed in my room, under his eyes, a little altar where a porcelain Virgin in a long blue mantle stretched out her bare hands between a double row of tiny candles. During the night when we were alone and could not sleep, she often made us get up, and we often prayed in our shirts for the afflicted. But it never seemed to me that they paid much attention to us in Heaven. God is pretty hard of hearing. He is lucky, I think! The cries never kept him awake as they did us. . . . And anyway, people kept saying that he had emigrated . . . Perhaps

you may have had the good fortune to meet him, sir?

THE PRINCE

My heavens, no! According to rumors in this part of the world he was pensioned off by Monsieur Robespierre.

JEAN-JACQUES

In that event, he must have been robbed. They pay in *assignats*.

THE PRINCE

In spite of your name, Jean-Jacques, you seem to have become as good a disciple of Voltaire as myself.

JEAN-JACQUES

No, monsieur, but I'd rather believe that God did not exist. He would be too cruel, if he really did live, watching all this and doing nothing.

THE PRINCE

He's a weak God, perhaps. He's waiting for people to help him.

JEAN-JACQUES

The dissatisfied frogs have dethroned him and put in his place the cranes who devour them.

THE PRINCE

You really please me. Your strange experiences have matured you. You are like an unripe walnut, soft and at the same time bitter.

JEAN-JACQUES

There has been hardly time to harden.

THE PRINCE

Misfortune is sometimes a blessing in disguise. Your exile takes you out of the poisoned air of the great city. At your age the body must be built up or it must fail. This mountain air will make a new man of you.

JEAN-JACQUES

I am small for my age. You seem to think I'm younger than I really am. I'm fifteen—that's really pretty old.

THE PRINCE

Quite as old as those infants who become twenty after sixty. Between the extremes there are the fools who know nothing but the present.

JEAN-JACQUES

They are the wise ones. I am nothing but the ball tossed about between two racquets—today and tomorrow.

THE PRINCE

The main thing, after all, is that the ball be well directed.

JEAN-JACQUES

The target is close. No matter how clumsy one might be, it would be hard to miss it.

(*His voice, still that of a child but firm, holds a melancholy that is quite free of self-pity.*)

THE PRINCE

(*Looking down at him affectionately, placing his hand on his shoulder. He speaks with a smile.*)

You are brave. But you confuse the etiquette. . . . It is my turn, first.

(*The voice of the Count outside is heard in the same instant.*)

THE COUNT

Here is the threshold, in the shade there. Allow me to give you my hand.

Scene VIII

(*The Count enters, hand in hand with Manon Regnault, guiding her through the shadows*

clustered about the gate. With her other hand, Manon is holding her father's arm.)

REGNAULT

(*To the Prince*)

I am sorry, sir, to burden you with my presence again.

THE PRINCE

The magic circle. Once one has entered here, it is impossible to get away.

THE COUNT

We found this gentleman almost in the middle of the forest. He had lost his way, getting further and further from the village and headed straight for the torrent—near the cataract.

THE PRINCE

The straight line is not always the shortest distance from one point to another here, Monsieur, as in your foot-rule politics.

REGNAULT

I am an old Jacobin. I go straight toward the danger, instinctively, with my eyes closed.

THE PRINCE

And that is, at the last reckoning, the only way the new France can touch the France of the past.

MANON

(*Who has walked over toward her young brother to exchange a few words with him*)

Monsieur, we are very grateful to you for having looked after this child.

THE PRINCE

I enjoyed his company.

REGNAULT

We have imposed on your hospitality long enough. Come, child, let us get back.

THE PRINCE

He is too weak to return on foot.

JEAN-JACQUES

Excuse me, sir, I can manage it.

(*He staggers to his feet, Manon supporting him.*)

MANON

He could never get back.

REGNAULT

(*Moved, kneeling near the child who has been helped back to the bench*)

What is it, my boy? He is fainting.

JEAN-JACQUES

(*Trying to reassure him*)

I'm all right. Only my head keeps spinning. I am ashamed of myself.

REGNAULT

It is all my fault, old fool that I am.

JEAN-JACQUES

I'm better already . . . In just a moment we can start.

THE COUNT

It would be better if you left him with us for the night.

REGNAULT

Under your roof? No, no . . . I'd rather carry him back.

THE COUNT

I doubt if you could do it.

MANON

We can carry him between us.

THE COUNT

What, you too, Mademoiselle. Are you afraid that the air in our house will poison him?

MANON

(*With unruffled politeness. She shows sincere regret at her decision, but expresses it with a proud reserve.*)

I am embarrassed, Monsieur, to have to reply so ungraciously to your kindness. I assure you that I am deeply touched. But I feel as my father does. We simply could not accept your hospitality.

THE COUNT

I hope, at least, that our proximity will not be painful to you.

MANON

(*Naïvely*)

Oh, no, indeed.

(*The Prince, since his last remark, has sized up the situation without paying attention to the last part of the conversation. He has crossed the court and given a few brief orders to one of the stablemen. Then, returning toward Manon, whose last words he has overheard, he says to her:*)

THE PRINCE

Let us make the best of our proximity here! Free on our side. Free on yours. But since, *Monsieur le Jacobin,* you have been the first to honor us with a visit on the evening of your arrival (whether you protest or not, it has already been done)—I don't wish it to be said that the politeness of a Courtenay has failed him. My carriage is being prepared to take you back to your home.

REGNAULT

Monsieur, I know the price of your favors. I assure you that I am embarrassed to accept them. I hate to owe anything to my enemies.

THE PRINCE

Well, then—but suppose the situation were changed, I in your place with your daughter and son—you would feel differently about it.

REGNAULT

That is as it may be. But what would you do if you were in my place?

THE PRINCE

(*With a studied indifference*)

I would accept, of course. What difference does it make?

REGNAULT

Yes. That pride of yours takes everything for granted.

THE PRINCE

(*In the same tone*)

I can't prevent you from thinking as you want to.

REGNAULT

Whether I wanted to or not I could hardly acquire that art of looking down my nose which is a first instinct with you. My nature is more open and more rude. I hate the things I fight, and I fight things that I hate.

THE PRINCE

(*Very calmly*)

Everything in its proper time. . . . Tonight the air is quiet, the brusque winds of the day have passed by, and the trees in the forest are sleeping. And in this strange country I am listening while French is being spoken.

(*Regnault, suddenly touched, moves toward the Prince and makes a scarcely perceptible gesture of offering him his hand. The Prince, impassive, appears not to have noticed it. In the dusk, little Jean-Jacques presses close*

to him instinctively, and the Prince strokes his cheek without looking down at him. The carriage draws up. Two horses. The lanterns are lighted. It stops near the group of people at the entrance of the house.)

REGNAULT

(*Overcome*)

Thank you! (*The word seems to catch in his throat. They climb into the carriage; the young girl and the child first, then Regnault. The group exchange bows silently. The carriage moves out into the night.*)

Scene IX

(*The Prince and the Count remain a moment, motionless, absorbed, listening to the sound of the departing carriage. Each one speaks to himself.*)

THE COUNT

Her hair gleams in the night. Like the torch-fires of Autumn.

THE PRINCE

Through the witchery of the moonlit forest, all these reminscences of the past! . . . Soli-

tude alive with people! The heart has need of human warmth! . . . even if it comes from an enemy.

ACT II

October, 1797.

Halfway up the first line of hills which dominates the plain of Soleure. A small glade in the middle of the woods runs out to a promontory over the valley. A short distance from the road, which ascends to the right and of which one bend can be seen, the glade is screened from passers-by by trees and bushes. At the rear and to the left, a steep slope lifts directly from the plain, and it is up this that the Prince and Regnault come at the opening of the Act.

On this grassy terrace, strewn with Autumn leaves drifting down from the chestnut trees, there appears at the right an irregular boulder with an inscription; and to the left a cross with a lance and a sponge on a stick.

From here the view opens widely in four successive stages.

The first shows the plain stretching off in meadows cut diagonally by an old avenue of poplars, touched to gold and partially stripped of their leaves.

The second shows the town in the distance and its tall trees shading the promenades of the bastions; the wall as at Vauban; rectangular steeples with bulging cupolas, great roofs with window stories rising above the glaze of red-brown tiles; thin, tall, ornamented chimneys.

The third shows the little hills covered with fields and pine copses forming successive waves which dwindle behind the town.

The fourth, and very far off, as if suspended without support in the misty sky, shows the snowy pyramids of the Oberland Alps, the Olympian Trinity. A crest of foam on the flood.[1]

The predominating colors are red and gold (the tiles of the roofs and the autumn trees) on a black and white background (the pine woods and the snows of the Alps with the mists on the plain).

The mists move slowly in long ribbons. The smoke rises from the chimneys of the town, with the sound of church bells. It is Sunday afternoon, a late Autumn day.

As the curtain rises, voices of girls are heard in

[1] The point of view in this act is the reverse of the previous one. The Jura which faced the spectator in the previous act is now behind him.

the woods, laughing and singing popular songs, and the rude shouting[1] *of boys. The sounds drift into the distance and the figures are not seen.*

In the left background, clambering up the steep slope which emerges on the terrace, the Prince appears (first his head, then his shoulders and body, top the rise) and after him Regnault.

The Prince is dressed in the costume of a substantial and sober bourgeois, through which, however, the manner of the aristocrat is unmistakable.

Regnault is wearing his long riding coat like a delegate on a mission. The climb was hard for him. He is short of breath; his legs are stiff and his back cramped. The vigorous Courtenay glances at him out of the corner of his eye with a malicious superiority.

Scene I

THE PRINCE

But you are tired, my dear sir. Come, let us get our breath. There is a seat with a beauti-

[1] I want to indicate by these outcries, and yodellings, the mountaineers of the Swiss Jura.

ful view. And enough air to fill yourself up on, if your own supply has run out.

REGNAULT

It's too much, not too little, air that is suffocating me. It affects one's heart.

THE PRINCE

(*Not without malice*)

You haven't exercised it enough.

REGNAULT

(*His latent suspicions stirred*)

Yours is doubtless so tough that nothing could make it beat any faster.

THE PRINCE

It beats in time to my footsteps. And they are firm enough. But yours, I'm afraid, wouldn't get you very far.

REGNAULT

At any rate they have followed the Marsellaise across the Rhine.

THE PRINCE

(*Ironically*)

I hope you don't expect me to sing it to you . . . Here, listen to those rustics. Shall

we follow them? (*The songs of the girls who are climbing the mountain are heard.*)

REGNAULT

Where are they going, those girls and boys?

THE PRINCE

To some place up there where they can dance and drink. Thank heaven the arrows of Geneva can't shoot this far. They are pagans, like you and myself. Today is the feast of St. Ursule. Urs [1] and Ursule, the Gods of the bear cubs, their holy patron. The bells are ringing. Sunday in October. The last of the good weather. I don't believe the day will pass without rain, though. The green lapwing is crying. The fogs are creeping like white serpents across the meadows. And the Jura is drawing on his coat. The clouds are coming down. The bells chime out for the sun's funeral. Come on, let's get on!

REGNAULT

I'm going to stay here. Climbs like this are too much for one of my age. Go ahead, if your legs are itching.

THE PRINCE

My legs, then, belong to another age?

[1] Pronounced *"Ours"* and *"Oursoule."*

REGNAULT

They belong to a different class. The rich and the great spend their lives taking care of themselves. They don't get old.

THE PRINCE

Well! You have put us in our place, *Monsieur le Jacobin.* Let's talk it over. Do you know the kind of a life we have been leading for almost six years? To nourish our bodies, you left us a little free air, and we could hardly expect the larks to fall into our mouths. While you were posing on our thrones, we did your work; and I might even say, without immodesty, that we could give you lessons in it today. Woodwork and metal work, stone and leather, blacksmith and carpenter, harness maker, currier. I would like to see you try a hand at it. Do you think you could make as good a job of resoling your shoes as I could? I have had lessons in Magdeburg in the shop of a Knight of St. Louis. Or take a trip to Altona or Hamburg. You will see Marquises there unloading ships. If these shoulders haven't bent under the years, it is because there has been plenty of work for them. They even carried bags of flour. And your mill, the red

mill, what was it turning out during all this time? (*His voice rises by degrees as he is talking until the final phrase.*)

REGNAULT

(*Starting, furiously*)

Traitors!

THE PRINCE

(*Overwhelming him with his scorn*)

French butchers!

REGNAULT

(*Proudly*)

Saviours of France!

THE PRINCE

(*Disdainfully*)

You've left her in a fine state!

REGNAULT

She is trampling on the world.

THE PRINCE

On you, too.

REGNAULT

On me and on you. So much the better—or worse.

THE PRINCE

(*Recovering himself, philosophically*)

All for the better, then! I am used to it. Your turn will come to know the tread of her feet.

REGNAULT

They are sacred.

THE PRINCE

More so than our heads?

REGNAULT

More than mine. I have striven to make the people conscious of their power, to make them understand that all power derives from them.

THE PRINCE

That was the power that *you* began to monopolize.

REGNAULT

In the name of the people.

THE PRINCE

(*Ironically*)

Of course.

REGNAULT

The people that you might have delivered! It was up to us to teach them to defend them-

selves against a Europe filled with enemies. You left the frontiers open for us, the armies deserted, the coffers empty, the state crumbling, all the machinery ruined, a regular Augean stable, a dung-heap! . . . And worst of all: the people that we had to guide, the ignorant masses, fearful, helpless and raging, incapable of distinguishing their true friends from the false, trapped in prejudices, falling in convulsions before the first windows open to the fresh air of liberty. . . .

THE PRINCE

(*Ironically*)

The sovereign people!

REGNAULT

Those masses dragging behind them the chains of five centuries of royalty, brutalized by you—those masses you never raised a finger to help! . . . Ah, that was the great crime, the inexpiable sin. It was you who forced us to tear them away from the precipice by terrorizing them, by goading them with threats, by giving them the choice between Fraternity and Death! Yes, you can laugh, Monsieur! You could hardly regret more than I, more than any of us, the bitterness of the choice. But who

else but you snatched away from the human family its feeling of nobility and solidarity? The work of centuries. It would take years to make it over. And we had only days and weeks. And we were never sure, even of the next day. Always you, your treason, gnawing through the very dikes of France, drawing the deluge on us, mining the soil under our feet, conspiring in the country: even the Convention was under the shadow of your corrupt methods. To fight and to conquer we had to strike like the lightning, without pity. We were caught up in the cyclone, and we became the cyclone. What days those were! Lasting forever, no twilight, no dawn, without interruption, it seemed as though it would never end.

THE PRINCE

(*Ironically*)

The night, you mean!

REGNAULT

(*Unheeding*)

The whole life of France, her cries of distress, her alarms, flowed into the great broth on the table of the Grand Committee. One swam the best one could; there was no time to stop and eat; one ate what dirty bloody bread one

could while in the water; and once in a while one crumpled up on the floor or on a mattress to sleep for an hour or two; one heard, even in slumber, the drums vociferating Liberty, ushering to their final rest the victims of the Guillotine (happier than us!) and now and then, side by side on the same mattress, St. Just, reciting Virgil to relax himself . . .

THE PRINCE

(*Always in the same ironical tone*)

The man of the Georgics is an indispensable guide for a tour of Hell.

REGNAULT

Hell. Yes. I know what it is like.

THE PRINCE

Were you one of the tormenters or just a condemned soul?

REGNAULT

Neither. A cinder. That's all I was. Just that.

THE PRINCE

(*Coldly and harshly*)

Too bad, Monsieur, that you weren't spared the pain of existing.

REGNAULT

(*With a somber fury*)

It didn't help my pain any just because you burned with me on the same pyre. You and I alike are nothing but shades.

THE PRINCE [1]

(*Recovering himself*)

That's true. We are nothing but shadows and ghosts of living people . . . Well then, instead of quarreling over what has already occurred and cannot be changed, let us imitate those smoke clouds over there which rise so straight and quietly from the roofs of the houses before dissolving . . . Look down there, below. There is your house, to the left. And mine to the right. Up here we are between the two. Neutral ground.

REGNAULT

(*Glancing at him, mollified*)

Happy land! It knows nothing of our hatred and strife.

[1] During the whole of this act, until after the dialogue of the two young people, the Prince is pushed into continually crossing swords with the former member of the Convention by his irony and animosity. Then, a realization of their common plight and the sense of his own dignity brings his detachment and courtesy to the surface. But his passions rise to take possession of him again.

THE PRINCE

Do you really think so?

REGNAULT

(*Indicating the vast prospect below*)

Such peace . . .

THE PRINCE

Don't trust it! One never knows its price until one has lost it. It might change with a single gun shot.

REGNAULT

What nonsense! These people have managed to escape the whole mix-up.

THE PRINCE

I know these neutrals. At the bottom of their hearts they are quite upset that the dance has simply passed by them.

REGNAULT

If only they don't announce it too loudly! The master of ceremonies is at their very gates. He would ask nothing better than to make them pay for the jig.

THE PRINCE

They have paid. Right up until now they have been feeling the need of—I don't quite

know what—to torment them. A good war, perhaps. . . . They are curious about it. What kind of a taste does it leave on the tongue? . . . The ulcer on their neighbor's leg. . . . They'd like to scratch themselves a while.

REGNAULT

No, I can't believe they are so mad. Men are pretty bad. But they know enough to avoid things that destroy them. They know what is good for them.

THE PRINCE

Do you know what is good for you? (*Recovering himself.*) Pardon me, I'm breaking the peace again.

REGNAULT

I was looking for the good of others, the sacrified.

THE PRINCE

And you found it?

REGNAULT

We were the first to attempt a doubtful experiment. It was natural that we should make mistakes. But those who come later will have time to rectify them. One would have to be

very young to begin again without the great urge that drove us on.

THE PRINCE

Every day youth renews itself again . . . Hold on, a moment. Talking of angels . . . Here comes a young fellow who likes nothing better than to speak his mind out!

Scene II

(*The old notary, Benedict Kulli, appears on the path which ascends to the right. He is a well-preserved old man, neat, small and lively, cheerful and brisk.*)

REGNAULT

The old notary, Kulli. You are fooling!

THE PRINCE

One can't be a beardless boy after twenty!

KULLI

(*With a mixture of malicious good humor and naïve bluster.*)

Can I believe my eyes! The white and the red together. You have been left alone, citizens and gentlemen! What imprudence!

THE PRINCE

Do you think that we are in danger of exterminating each other?

KULLI

But it is your duty, Mr. Citizen, your strict duty enjoined on you by Nature and Reason.

REGNAULT

It's hardly necessary to remind us of that.

THE PRINCE

Reason and Nature are amiable fellows. They cry red or white, depending on how one whistles.

KULLI

Reason tells us that right should exterminate wrong.

THE PRINCE

But what is wrong?

KULLI

With all due respect, Monsieur, you are.

THE PRINCE

Good enough! And what does Nature say?

KULLI

Nature says that one must eat to live.

THE PRINCE

You have strong teeth for your age.

KULLI

And a magnificent appetite.

THE PRINCE

And who are you planning to eat?

KULLI

My old friend, here . . . Citizen Schultheiss.[1]

Scene III

(*Schultheiss Wallier appears in the left background climbing up the steep slope.*)

SCHULTHEISS

(*Who has overhead the last part of the conversation*)

Hold on there, my good friend, you are in too much of a hurry. It's not time to eat again.

[1] All this dialogue and that which follows is carried on in a sprightly tone. The men joke against a serious background never losing sight of the truth.

KULLI

Everything is set for it. There's nothing left but to begin.

SCHULTHEISS

You might get indigestion.

KULLI

Not if one cuts the pieces small enough. (*All this is spoken in a tone of cordial, pleasant raillery. Both Kulli and the Schultheiss laugh.*)

SCHULTHEISS

(*To the Prince, indicating Kulli*)

These cannibals!

REGNAULT

(*To Kulli*)

Is this a game?

KULLI

(*In the same tone*)

Not a bit of it. He will have me on the table, or I him.

SCHULTHEISS

You are too slow. Why not let Saint Guillotine of Paris arrange the affair for you?

KULLI

Well, well. I won't contradict you. . . . To be frank, I don't care much for blood. It disgusts me. It would be enough for me to have you sheared. . . . But I would really like to see the sacred National Razor put on exhibition in the main square as an example and symbol of the new times, of the great levelling.

REGNAULT

I can't put up with these pleasantries.

KULLI

I'm not trying to be funny, my good friend. (*With these words Regnault and Kulli form a separate group to the left, the Prince and the Schultheiss to the right. Each of the two groups carries on its own discussion, all the time keeping an ear open to the remarks of the other.*)

REGNAULT

When we were working with the Terror, it was not because we wanted to, but because we had to.

KULLI

We need it here. We also have privileges to abolish.

SCHULTHEISS

You benefit by them, my dear Notary. You also are a member of "Their Graces and Highnesses, the Council and the Burghers." [1]

KULLI

I renounce and denounce them. I'm going to have my own night of the Fourth of August.

REGNAULT

The night of the Fourth of August. Watch out!

KULLI

Of course. We want all of it. Even if we are rustics, our sky is just as wide as yours. We don't go begging for stars in our Patriots Club. But why is it, Citizen, that we never see you there? We've been waiting for you. We'd be glad to let you take a look at our sturdy members, our brainy heads . . . Sure enough —we have our own Condorcet, our own Courvosier and Robespierre. It goes without saying, on a smaller scale: in a little city like ours with a population of ten thousand we can't, of course, manage as well as you did in Paris . . .

[1] "Ihro Gnaden und Herrlichkeiten Rät und Burgern." The official designation of the two Committees (Grosse Rat and Kleine Rat) which constitute the supreme authority in Soleure.

But it can be done, all right, on a small scale, and more than one of our actors is worthy of a larger stage. Large or small, ours can speak for themselves. It's up to you, Citizen, to give us a hand in the performance! You had a good fat part in that other one, down there. Your advice would be invaluable. I don't know of anyone more suited to give us a few lessons in manufacturing a Revolution.

REGNAULT

Revolutions manufacture themselves. They can't be ordered in advance. There is one of the people who made it possible. (*He indicates the Prince.*) They were responsible for the abuses. The rest of us were nothing but instruments of the Righteous Wrath that avenged itself.

KULLI

(*Indicating the Schultheiss, not without regret*)

Our abusers, I must confess, are a little light for their rôle. But don't let that make any difference! We'll make up for it.

SCHULTHEISS

(*To the Prince*)

Listen to them chattering away at our expense. We've always had clear water here.

Now there's a whole band of them who must upset the bowl in order to catch the fish.

THE PRINCE

Is it really so serious?

SCHULTHEISS

More so than you might believe. Paris has turned their heads. That old man over there, much as I like him—a fine old fellow, honorable, sensible—is one of the worst of them. He won't give himself any rest until he has overthrown our old fortress, our Constitution—a little too old, I confess, but—corrected from time to time by changing customs—quite satisfactory and suited to everyone. Our privileges of the old type are only for show. We don't make use of them and they are simply a matter of course which needn't bother anyone.

THE PRINCE

But that's no good. People like to be bothered. Schultheiss, you forget that for that animal afflicted with a mind, which trips him up and hides simple realities from him, deeds count for little, and right—that dunder-headed abstraction—means everything.

SCHULTHEISS

Simpleton or not, that old heron fishing in troubled waters (*he indicates Regnault*) is a little too much for us. You were quite right: his presence here is dangerous. He sets the others an example. But I've made up my mind to make an example, myself, of that firebrand. You will agree with me when I tell you that I plan to put him out of this place, him and his kind, one of these nights, and to give him a return passage, prepaid, to the frontier.

THE PRINCE

(*Firmly*)

That you shall not do.

SCHULTHEISS

Who is going to stop me? Everyman's home is his castle.

THE PRINCE

I quite agree. I tell you, though—put me out first!

SCHULTHEISS

I don't think I understand.

THE PRINCE

If you put him out, then I go, too.

SCHULTHEISS

He's an enemy of yours. I'm ridding you of him.

THE PRINCE

He is my enemy—yes—down there, on the other side of the frontier, in France. (*Without turning he gestures over his shoulder toward the invisible Jura.*) Enemy, yes—to the death. But here, exiled as I am, he's merely a Frenchman. And I'm another. In the absence of an ambassador here, my duty as Prince is to defend persons of my nation, my subjects.

SCHULTHEISS

Your subjects? They have ceased to be that. They have disowned you.

THE PRINCE

They can't do it. They were born subjects. They will remain so until the Day of Judgment.

KULLI

(*To Regnault, indicating the Schultheiss and the Prince*)

They are talking about us. Beware of them! Schultheiss Wallier is my colleague. I know him. He's an easy-going chap. I like him.

But touch him on his sore point, his privileges —or his purse, especially his purse, that double chin of his—and he'll pounce on you. And as for that other (*indicating the Prince*) I'm astonished to see you rubbing shoulders with him. He's made up to you simply to pull the wool over your eyes. But one of these fine days he intends to take the road to France again, with his king; and on that day, your account will be settled; he won't forget anything. The gentlemen of Bern wouldn't be in the least offended to see him getting back his old privileges. That whole class hangs together like so many thieves. And Royal France was a better client for us Swiss than the Republic. For two centuries that town of ours has amused itself at the expense of your ambassadors. During the Fêtes of France, they threw away gold by the handful and the fountains ran with red and white wine. Under such circumstances, our rulers have simply become beggars. They seem to think they have been robbed by the Republic. The Republic has cut off their free money. They do nothing to get it back again. They are neutral through loyalty. But, loyally, they let things alone. The old order may conspire. They close their eyes. But, fortunately,

3 3088

ours are open. None of their intrigues escape us. We pass them on to our friends, the Patriots, at the Swiss Club in Paris. And Reubel is warned. One must help the champions of progress. . . . Come with us, Citizen! The hour approaches. I'm holding on; I want to see what is coming out of this. . . . Come closer here. We have had glorious news. We are conspiring with Bonaparte. The hero of Campio Formio has given us to understand that he will pass next month with us on his way to the conference at Rastalt. Our aristocrats look down their noses and smile yellowly. But they don't dare to refuse him. We are going to give him the warmest kind of a reception. We count on you to be our spokesman.

REGNAULT

I—I? Greet that pirate! What do you expect me to say to him? . . . "You, robber of the people, give back the liberties you have stolen!" Or should I remind him that the Tarpeian Rock is only a few paces from the capitol? If I had anything to say about it, he'd take those few steps this very day.

KULLI

You don't mean what you are saying! That august conqueror!

REGNAULT

August! . . . Truths from the mouths of dotards . . . That would-be Augustus, you mean. In the meantime he is playing the part of Octavius. . . . If I were Brutus, I would have saved a dagger thrust for him.

KULLI

The young champion of Liberty!

REGNAULT

Wait until you see what he does to you! How blind you are to call the hawk into your hen-roost! Those soldiers are putting an end to Liberty. And she, the slut, likes nothing better than to be ruined, like a soldier's girl. . . . I have only one regret. When I was on the committee, we had him in our power. The piercing eye of Robespierre saw the serpent in the egg. He wanted to stamp it to death. And I intervened. May I suffer for it!

KULLI

(*Good-humouredly ironical*)

Ah, it is true you belong to the times of the Incorruptible. But time has passed since then. You are out of date—too late, my friend.

REGNAULT

Yes, I am nothing but an anachronism. And perhaps you can tell me the order of the day, young man that you are.

KULLI

It is certainly not long-winded discussions by the hundred-headed Republican Committees. It is action, brief, decisive, by a military Republic.

REGNAULT

You are going to tell me something new before long!

KULLI

You are a reactionary, a Robespierre. One must march with the times.

REGNAULT

And who are the shining lights at present?

KULLI

Barras, of course, and Bonaparte. (*Regnault laughs harshly.*) Laugh, if you want to. There are several stories in the House of the Republic. And the highest is the last to be built.

REGNAULT

And the first to fall.

KULLI

What you lack is faith. They did a good job when they threw you out. You have let too much rain fall on your red cap. The color is running. It's a good thing there is plenty of real fighting blood to go on where you stopped.

SCHULTHEISS

Happy youth! . . . But, listen a moment, Kulli. What is that? Is that your last crowd of converts passing by yonder? (*The sound of a troupe of young people passing by is heard. They are singing a song deriding the Allies defeated by Napoleon.*[1])

KULLI

(*Listening*)

Surely—that is what they are—our latest converts. Our little red-breasts. Our patriots. Our little clerks, our workers (*with satisfaction*). They sing quite nicely.

THE PRINCE

What are they singing? It's impossible to understand your jargon.

[1] "Der Kaiser war fuchstenfelswild . . ." (Soleure Folksong.) The origin of this popular song was the capture by the French of Luxembourg in 1795. It spread throughout the armies.

KULLI

They are saying, Monseigneur Citizen, that the Emperor, the Kings, the Princes are *"nonnigenug, nonnigenug."* They are thrashed, beaten, so "fidiralerallera, fiderallerallera." (*He snaps his fingers, humming the air.*)

SCHULTHEISS

It's an army song. And these "Patriots" of ours are pulling our legs. They have added a few couplets for the benefit of our "Graces and Magnificences."

KULLI

You must hear our latest song. (*He leans down over the railing of the terrace and calls to the singers.*) Hey there, larks of Liberty. Sing "Schultheiss Wallier." (*He begins singing himself.*)

THE PATRIOTS

(*Off-stage*)

Long live Kulli! (*They sing.*)

SCHULTHEISS

(*To Kulli*)

I'd advise you to shut them up. I see some friends of law and order coming who might teach them another tune.

KULLI

Let them sing their own song. Whoever sings the loudest gets the prize.

SCHULTHEISS

On with the sing-song! (*The voices of the two parties are heard, exchanging uncomplimentary epithets.*)

THE TWO TROUPES

(*Off stage*)

Traitors!
Slaves!
Hangmen!
Tyrants!
Bootlickers of the French!
Cuckolds of Berne!

(*The quarreling continues.*)

KULLI

(*Leaning over the edge, laughing*)

That's getting back at them. Bravo, little ones!

SCHULTHEISS

(*Seizing him by the arm*)

Kulli, don't expose yourself! (*A clamour of voices is heard from below*—"There he is, the old brigand. Come on, let's get him.")

SCHULTHEISS

(*Pointing to the path at the left*)

That way, Kulli! Hurry!

KULLI

(*Seating himself on the edge of the balustrade, comfortably. He takes a pinch of snuff and wipes his hands.*)

I'll do nothing of the kind. This is too good.

Scene IV

(*A couple of big fellows rush on the scene—workers and peasants in their Sunday best. They make for Kulli without paying any attention to the others.*)

THE CROWD

The old devil, that impious scoundrel who is trying to destroy our God, our laws; that rascal who is drawing the foreigners down on us! One of these days, someone is going to nail him up to a barn door like an owl.

KULLI

(*Cheerfully*)

Like the vagabond Jesus Christ on the cross. . . . Go ahead, go ahead, my friend! (*Outcries of indignation*)

THE CROWD

He is insulting the Saviour. . . . Ah. He calls himself a vagabond. All right; let's see what we can do about it! We'll drag him home down the hill on his tail . . .

SCHULTHEISS

My friends . . . Have you no respect for old age?

KULLI

My friends, don't let that stop you! If I had anything to say about it, my white hairs would all be red!

(*Outcries.*)

THE CROWD

We'll give you a red behind instead!

(*They seize him by the feet, pull him across the grass, and start to drag him off.*)

SCHULTHEISS

(*Stepping in*)

Stop! I forbid this . . .

KULLI

(*Cheerfully, as they drag him off, not too roughly*)

Oh, leave them alone, my friend. Things must go like this. This is the way things are

done when a Revolution is being staged. How about it, you gentlemen and citizens?

(*He disappears, dragged off by the feet. The Schultheiss follows after him, arguing with the crowd.*)

Scene V

(*The Prince and Regnault alone. They follow with their eyes for a moment the disappearing tumultuous crowd and then stare at each other distrustfully.*)

THE PRINCE

What clownishness!

REGNAULT

Yes, that's just the way it begins. They make a noise, all in fun. They swagger around just as if they were on the stage. But, watch out! At the first bloodshed, everything changes in the wink of an eye. Once let the beast taste it, and the taste grows . . .

THE PRINCE

(*Coldly, cruelly*)

You ought to know!

REGNAULT

(*His hatred flaring back in an instant*)

Almost as well as you!

THE PRINCE

(*Carried away violently again—speaking without a gesture and without raising his voice—but at the last words his distrust and hatred show on his lips and in his gaze*)

You have had enough of playing with words, deadly words, tinsel swords in a circus parade. All that bric-a-brac of antiquity that your Jean-Jacques, the Genevese pedant, who lit such a flame in his pupils, has dressed you up in; all this about Cassius and Brutus, all that *De Viris*, half-digested (you were belching it out a moment ago). All your stupid rhetoric! What torrents of blood it has cost. And those torrents continue to flow, nothing can stop them, they run like a river, rushing over France, inundating Europe, the whole world. Those loud-mouths ought to be satisfied at last. . . . Lap it up! . . . Rascals!

REGNAULT

(*Fiercely*)

At least I haven't got the taste of my brother's blood on my tongue. At the very least, I am no Cain!

(*The Prince receives the allusion with a steady face. He marches up toward Regnault, his arms hanging, wide apart, his fists clenched. Regnault waits for him with murder in his eyes. They are on the point of grappling . . . Two quiet voices, known to both of them, are heard at that instant. They separate and draw back, continuing to measure each other with their eyes. They look for concealment, each at an opposite side of the stage. Regnault, to the left, behind a clump of chestnuts, and the Prince to the right, behind the irregular stone block.*[1])

Scene VI

(*The Count and Manon Regnault enter. Manon glances at the wide sweep of the terrace; walks over to the edge and gazes down on the valley.*)

MANON

The beautiful Autumn!

THE COUNT

The countryside has taken your colors. I see you everywhere.

[1] The Prince and Regnault do not have to give the appearance of hiding. In retiring, they merely withdraw from the notice of the new arrivals.

MANON

If my youth wears the colors of Autumn (unhappy times!), what will my own Autumn be like?

THE COUNT

Like the youth of the old times. I remember your mother. She wore her blonde hair powdered white as snow.

MANON

Despite her trouble it remained blonde until her death.

THE COUNT

Despite your happiness, may yours keep its flame color until the night!

MANON

In our plight—ah—what happiness can we expect?

THE COUNT

Happiness doesn't wait for us. One must seize it—as I seize this branch shedding its golden hair down on us.

MANON

(*Looking down at the carpet of dead leaves at her feet*)

What a carpet! Like the skin of a tiger.

THE COUNT

Yes, the forest sleeps at your feet.

MANON

(*Stooping to pick up some chestnuts*)

Ah, look at the chestnuts. How long ago it was I used to prick my fingers on their horny heads . . . Prick my hands again, thorns. It feels so good.

THE COUNT

Didn't you go to the country very often?

MANON

Since I was seven years old, we hardly ever left Paris. My memories of the country are all before that time. How I love to call them up again, here! . . . That avenue of box-wood . . . These cedars . . . Down there, that row of poplars . . . Every step I take brings something to mind again. Different as this landscape is from ours—it's the country anyway. It is wonderful to touch the earth with your hands and feet—the real earth. Since we have come to live down there (*she points to the house, below*) I have spent every day in the garden, digging in the ground with my fingers, burrowing around and running

about like a little beetle. The earth is my real grandmother. Six long years since I have seen her. She has so many things to talk to me about! . . . You must be so happy to be living with her from dawn to nightfall.

THE COUNT

Yes, she is a good friend. She never betrays one.

MANON

Even when the hail spoils all your work?

THE COUNT

She doesn't betray. She is betrayed. Like us. She shares our pain with us.

MANON

What a good wife for a man!

THE COUNT

(*Simply*)

I think so, too.

(*He looks at Manon. There is a short silence.*)

MANON

(*Flushing, changing her tone*)

Have you been here a long time?

THE COUNT

A year. Since the death of the young king.

MANON

(*Surprised*)

What king?

THE COUNT

The child, Louis XVII. After that, we had nothing to hold us in the army. I broke my last lance at Affenburg, for the lost scepter. But up until that time, unlike you, I hardly knew what a roof was. I have been beating about in the country for seven years.

MANON

(*Suddenly frozen*)

Yes, I remember. You fought against France.

THE COUNT

(*Gently but firmly*)

I fought for France.

MANON

(*Violently*)

You betrayed her.

THE COUNT

(*Listening sadly, steps back a pace and speaks with respectful firmness*)

Mademoiselle, the traitors were on the other side.

MANON

(*Recoiling*)

Who then? Do you mean us?

THE COUNT

(*Trying to pacify her*)

You have been badly taught.

MANON

(*Passionately*)

Do you mean me? Answer me! Me or you? There is no other choice.

THE COUNT

Neither you nor myself. I wasn't trying to accuse you.

MANON

(*Passionately*)

But I accuse you! You deserted your own country! You fought against her. Delivered her to the enemy. Why? Why? (*Suddenly*

she breaks away, sits down at the foot of the cross and bursts into tears.)

THE COUNT

(*Moved, walking over to her*)

You are crying? . . . On account of me? Because of me? (*Aside.*) How passionate she is! (*To Manon.*) I was an officer. I had to serve. Whom? My natural superior, he whose wishes have been law for all good Frenchman for ten centuries, the King. Or should I have served the brigands? Pardon! I mean the revolutionaries who imprisoned him and forced him to subscribe to their actions? Answer me that!

MANON

You should have served the Nation, free to overthrow its kings, who are no better than the others: subjects—like you.

THE COUNT

The free Nation? Where is she? Is she in your prisons? Is she the jailer?

MANON

She exists in the free will, as expressed by her representatives.

THE COUNT

Whose do you mean? The free will of the guillotined? Or of those who did the guillotining? Your father proscribed? Or your father the proscriber?

MANON

Proscriber or proscribed, they fought for France. You, you fought against her.

THE COUNT

(*Gently*)

We are France also. And you fought against us. Does the right to live exist for one side only? And the right to die for the other?

MANON

For one side and the other, there is only one right—to live and die for their country.

THE COUNT

She is here, that country, and there. (*He points to Manon and himself.*)

MANON

(*Baffled*)

I don't want to argue. I don't know how to argue. But I know what is right and wrong.

THE COUNT

I shan't argue any more either. I am no debater, who knows the answer to all his own arguments. I am a Courtenay, and I know what my honor and station demand of me. When I saw that the king was nothing more than an instrument of the factions in the Legislative assembly, I went to my colonel, the respected chief of a regiment in which I was Master of Camp, an old officer who had served under Monsieur de Chevert; I asked him to talk to me like a father to his son. He told me that my instincts had not betrayed me, that honor demanded of every officer that he break with a service which had become nothing but passive resistance toward an uprising of lackeys. Their Revolution was nothing but a disguised grand-scale robbery masked by the tricks of the weasel-faced Assembly. The mask and the gloves came off; and one saw the claws and the teeth. There was nothing to be gained by waiting too long. Monsieur de Condé, the duc de Bourbon, the young duc d' Enghien—that house of glory—were mustering an army, across the frontiers, of soldiers faithful to their oath, the army of France. The only one; one must

join it. And so I joined it. And so I kept to my oath, no matter what it cost.

MANON

And you regret nothing?

THE COUNT

One can hardly regret one's loyalty.

MANON

(*Bitterly*)

Acting the traitor!

THE COUNT

To whom?

MANON

(*Carried away*)

To me! . . . (*She recovers herself immediately.*) Everything that I believe in. Everything that I love.

THE COUNT

Everything?

MANON

Yes.

THE COUNT

And forever?

MANON

(*Passionately—desperately*)

Yes, yes!

(*There is a brief silence.*)

THE COUNT

If I had been captured, what would your people have done to me?

MANON

If you had captured my father, what would you have done to him?

(*A silence.*)

THE COUNT

(*Firmly*)

Killed him.

MANON

(*Implacably*)

And they would have killed you.

(*A short silence.*)

THE COUNT

(*Sitting down, losing his self-control for a moment, with an unhappy gesture of appeal*)

Manon! . . . Would you have been glad if that had happened?

MANON

(*Sadly*)

You would gladly have had it happen to us, and you still would.

THE COUNT

I wanted those things to happen that it was my duty to hope for. And now . . . I don't want anything any more . . . I deceive myself. I want that which I have no right to!

MANON

And I—I ought to hate you . . . And I don't want to! . . . I want . . . But I can't. . . . Leave me—please, go away!

(*She draws away from him, weeping.*)

THE COUNT

Manon, let me escort you to your hotel?

MANON

No. . . . You take your path and I'll take mine . . . For the present, everything is finished. . . .

(*She goes off down the steep slope to the left. The Count, overwhelmed, follows her with*

his eyes for a moment, and then exits by the path, right.)

Scene VII

(*The Prince and Regnault both leave the shelters where they have been concealed. Regnault leans over the edge of the slope which Manon has begun to descend, and prepares to follow her. The Prince watches him, hesitates, then stops him by calling:*)

THE PRINCE

Regnault! (*Remembering himself.*) Monsieur . . . Wait!

REGNAULT

(*Without turning his head*)

No. I am going after her.

THE PRINCE

One moment!

(*Regnault stops on the first step of the descent and looks at the Prince.*)

THE PRINCE

I have already begun to miss our little truce.

REGNAULT

(*Brutally—with no desire to make friends with him*)

It's already done. The truce has been broken.

THE PRINCE

No. In this land of exile, you are—whatever you might have been—a part of France.

REGNAULT

(*After thinking matters over for a moment*)

Yes. France is here.

THE PRINCE

Let us respect her in each other.

REGNAULT

So be it!

(*He is about to go again. The Prince holds him with a gesture, without speaking.*)

I ought to join that child.

THE PRINCE

It is of her that I want to talk to you.

(*Regnault gazes at him. The Prince wears an impenetrable air. He sits down and motions for Regnault to imitate him. Regnault sits.*)

THE PRINCE

Just a moment ago you were reminding me that we were nothing but shades. Shadowy, our life. Shadowy, our hate. But we have almost finished with life—Regnault, do you want it to spring up again in those who are just beginning—in those children?

REGNAULT

They are our blood.

THE PRINCE

(*Unperturbed*)

Your daughter's blood is that of Abel—you know that as well as I do.

REGNAULT

(*Unable to repress a start; he regards the unperturbed Prince and says in a hollow voice:*)

It cries for revenge!

THE PRINCE

(*Unruffled*)

It was avenged a long time ago.

(*Regnault keeps his gaze on the Prince who does not return it. He finds no reply. The*

Prince continues, in the same voice, grave and commanding:)

THE PRINCE

Regnault, those, like us, who have survived that decade when all the destructive forces of the centuries seem to have been released, those who, like us, have moved amid scenes of crime and mingled with them so that we no longer knew whose blood was being spilled at our feet—Is it ours? Is it someone's else? —such people are hardly in a position to throw accusations at each other. They know what man is, and the terrible forces of destruction that lurk in him. We have used, you and I, all our force. And, in the end, it is we who have been destroyed. It is enough. I want to call "halt" to those who follow us. They don't share with us that joy in hatred, the rage for destruction, of which I myself am sick to death. Isn't it the same with you?

REGNAULT

I was an instrument. The instrument was destroyed. One doesn't ask a tool whether or not it enjoys destruction.

THE PRINCE

The axe has fallen.

REGNAULT

I'll throw the handle after it.

THE PRINCE

If only someone does not pick it up again!

REGNAULT

No, that isn't the legacy that I want to pass on to my children. They couldn't carry the weight of it. My sick boy . . .

THE PRINCE

How is he today?

REGNAULT

It's a matter of months, or of weeks. I know that. He is dying. The fire has burned out. I have sacrificed him. He and his mother, they were not made to survive the burning breath of the hurricane, into which, tied to me, my kind plunged them. The Revolution drank their breath.

THE PRINCE

Won't the breath of the open fields give it back again?

REGNAULT

It is too late. The cage is open. (*He lays a hand on his chest.*) The bird is flying from the bars. (*After a moment of silence.*) I know, monsieur, the kindness which you have shown toward that child, the books and the medicines which you have sent. I wanted to thank you at the moment. But that rage that is in both of us, that we seem unable to master, stepped in the way. I want, therefore, to take this opportunity to thank you—especially in view of the possibility that we may be locking horns like two bulls in another instant again.

THE PRINCE

Courtenay says no. A proconsul of the Convention—can he be less sure of his will power?

REGNAULT

I had enough of it in the old days. It has fled from me now. But I shall master myself. It shall not be said that Courtenay has outdone me.

THE PRINCE

(*After a brief moment of reflection, and not without embarrassment*)

That young girl . . . (*He indicates the slope behind his back which Manon has been descending*) . . . Have you spoken to her of the past?

REGNAULT

No. Why should I trouble her with it?

THE PRINCE

(*Relieved*)

She does not know her origin?

REGNAULT

I married her mother before the daughter of Abel was born. She is my daughter.

THE PRINCE

Nothing has happened since to stir any suspicion in the two children?

REGNAULT

We left that part of the country. She—she never went back. We agreed, my wife and I, to keep the wound hidden. I know well enough that the wound was never healed. But each of us kept the knowledge of it to ourselves. She died without mentioning it.

THE PRINCE

A hardy race! . . . Like our own . . . Firm lips hiding the wounds in the heart. . . . Ah, that is well.

(*He has risen and begins to pace up and down. After a moment he indicates the spot where Manon and the Count were standing.*)

THE PRINCE

Did you take part, like me, in their argument?

REGNAULT

Insoluble argument!

THE PRINCE

Do you think so? Regnault, imagine what would have happened if they had been here together without us.

REGNAULT

They didn't know that we were here.

THE PRINCE

We were at the back of their thoughts. . . . Supposing that their thoughts, free of any anger, had been directed solely toward each other. . . . Doesn't it seem to you that they

would have found the solution to their argument quickly enough?

REGNAULT

Their trouble speaks for itself.

THE PRINCE

It is we, always, who quarrel in them. We misuse them. Let us efface ourselves!

REGNAULT

What can we do about it?

THE PRINCE

Let them alone. Step out of their sunlight.

REGNAULT

Our ideas would still remain.

THE PRINCE

Those clouds. . . . They hang heavily in mid-life. But they could not screen a young sun.

REGNAULT

You are more detached than I from living things.

THE PRINCE

(*Gesturing toward the falling leaves*)

Dead leaves! . . . I don't detach myself from them . . . They drop from me.

REGNAULT

Don't you miss them?

THE PRINCE

They make me feel lighter . . . You will see, you also . . . Let them fall! (*He continues to pace up and down the length of the terrace while speaking. Suddenly he stops and peers down the hill.*) But who is that coming up here? What folly!

REGNAULT

(*Rising to see; but the Prince's exclamation has aroused his forebodings*)

It can't be? . . . Jean-Jacques?

THE PRINCE

(*Angry*)

Yes, indeed, it is your son. Can't you keep him at home?

REGNAULT

I told him not to leave the garden. I left him lying down . . . (*He calls out.*) Stop!

THE PRINCE

At least he might have followed the path with its windings! He is climbing the steep slope.

REGNAULT

I'm going down to him.

THE PRINCE

(*Stopping him*)

No. You might fall. Let me go.

VOICE OF JEAN-JACQUES

(*Singing*)

"While singing of Victory . . ."

THE PRINCE

And he is singing. The young fool. He will kill himself.

(*He starts to run down the hill.*)

REGNAULT

(*Furiously uneasy*)

You young brat! Hold your tongue, there!

Scene VIII

(*The Prince has seized the breathless Jean-Jacques in his strong arms and lifts him above the edge of the terrace.*)

JEAN-JACQUES

(*Keeping up the song*)

". . . the gateways open wide . . ." (*But his voice is choked off, and the song ends in a convulsive fit of coughing.*)

REGNAULT

Be still! Will you be still?

THE PRINCE

(*Making a sign for Regnault to be still himself; to Jean-Jacques:*)

Now then; the song is finished.

(*He sets him down on the green slope, at the foot of the irregular stone, and remains for a moment bending over him, supporting his head.*)

JEAN-JACQUES

(*Wiping his mouth, gets his breath back and speaks in a voice weak but happy*)

Ah! Poor Victory. She has lead on her wings.

THE PRINCE

A fine trick you played on us! Are you better, now?

JEAN-JACQUES

Surely. I am quite happy. I wanted to come. And here I am!

(*The Prince rises, shaking his head as though to growl at him, but laughs instead.*)

REGNAULT

(*Furiously*)

Young brigand!

JEAN-JACQUES

No—don't scold me. . . . A little more, a little less! I knew that you were here . . . I love this spot, these trees, this horizon . . . Perhaps it is the last time that I shall be able to climb up here. (*He hastens to reassure his father who is on the point of speaking.*) But, of course—Winter is coming . . . Perhaps this is the last fine day.

THE PRINCE

(*Examining the sky*)

It won't last until evening. The sun is already getting misty.

JEAN-JACQUES

Oh! A tiny bit of the sun is really enough for me. It shouldn't be difficult to provide.

THE PRINCE

Very well. Lie down there . . . We won't scold you any more. What is done is done.

REGNAULT

I must go down now . . . Monsieur, I leave him to your care . . . I know that you will be glad of each other's company. . . . Watch out for the little rascal!

THE PRINCE

I'll take care of him, Monsieur. Believe me, I understand your: "Pax Nobiscum." And I reply: "Amen!"

REGNAULT

(*Makes as though he did not understand the meaning of the words, but with a friendly brusqueness*)

Don't be too long! The rain isn't very far off.

(*He goes off, after stroking the boy's cheek and exchanging a glance of understanding with the Prince.*)

Scene IX

(The Prince and Jean-Jacques alone)

JEAN-JACQUES

(Sniffing the air with delight)

The rain is close at hand, and it still holds off. It is the best moment of all. The light grows misty and the colors are brightened. The harshness disappears from the earth. More happiness. No more sadness . . . What peace!

THE PRINCE

(Pointing out the snowy mountain chain on the horizon)

Do you see the Alps soaring up down there? When they come close like that, the fine weather is over.

JEAN-JACQUES

(Sits down on the edge of the terrace, and with his chin on his hands, supported by the balustrade, leans out over the valley)

The last part is the most beautiful of all.

THE PRINCE

The shadow has veiled the base of the three peaks from the sun.

JEAN-JACQUES

They are like a procession of swans.

THE PRINCE

(*Following the analogy, in the same tone, calmly and gently*)

On the ponds at Courtenay . . . (*But he isn't the kind of a person to waste time over a fantasy.*) . . . And you, my little duck, calling out greetings to the rain; one would think that you wanted to take a plunge into the great earth-lake down there under its mists.

JEAN-JACQUES

I would like to suck it down like a sherbet . . . I'm quite a gourmand. I would like to eat up everything that I feel and love at this moment.

THE PRINCE

Ah! . . . You remind me of someone. . . . God knows why!

JEAN-JACQUES

Whom, Monsieur?

THE PRINCE

A young brother who has disappeared.

JEAN-JACQUES

Did he look like me?

THE PRINCE

You are quite different . . . But there is something, a turn of phrase, an accent, a light in the face. . . . It is an old perfume rising from my flower-beds, a hyacinth blossom, perhaps, a song of Spring in the branches.

JEAN-JACQUES

Did he love life?

THE PRINCE

He was a gourmand, like you. Life was a royal feast for him . . . The table was taken away before he had finished.

JEAN-JACQUES

Just like me.

THE PRINCE

But he had a much better appetite than you.

JEAN-JACQUES

It isn't the appetite that is lacking in my case. It's the table. . . . Think, Monsieur, this is the first time—these last days—that I have ever tasted the Autumn.

THE PRINCE

It is faithful, nevertheless, to its appointments.

JEAN-JACQUES

We weren't permitted to get near it. It was a prisoner like me in the streets of Paris. Only think, Monsieur! Not a single day in the country since I was born. . . . My father had no time for it. My mother always sick. The seasons refused to visit us in our remote little place in the street they used to call Dauphine. The only thing that brought me any feeling of the earth was the Seine; it came from far off, from some place outside the human prison; its colors changed, and the expression of its eyes; I could see in it trees bending over and the reflection of the houses, the fields, the forests, and the horses at the watering place . . . But to see without eyes, with the back of one's head, as in a book, that is not really seeing! One felt the mouth and the eyelids and the nostrils and everything inside, drying up. . . . A flower in a pot! They forgot to water me. . . . And how much of it I have had since leaving that city of stone! I have had the wind and the rain and the damp earth . . . God, what happiness! . . . They told us:

"It's a bad year. A bad Summer." But for me it is the most beautiful that my eyes have ever looked on. And I have had it, I have devoured it, I haven't let a single crumb go to waste. I love it so much. And now that I have the Autumn, I hold it, I feel its fleece (*he catches up handfuls of the dead leaves and buries his face in them.*) And its arms around my neck . . . And Winter is coming . . . Ah, God, how much I would like to see the Spring, too! . . . I have never seen it!

(*After this long outburst he checks himself suddenly, his face hidden in his hands.*)

THE PRINCE

(*Bending over the child, with affectionate pity*)

I see it. . . . My dear boy!

JEAN-JACQUES

(*Lifting his head quickly*)

Why do you call me your boy? I am not your boy.

THE PRINCE

(*Gently*)

Perhaps after all you are. . . .

(*It is the first time that he has addressed the child so familiarly. The boy shows no sign. But he has noticed it, none the less.*)

JEAN-JACQUES
(*Startled*)

Oh! You mean? (*The Prince says nothing. Jean-Jacques has risen.*) Is it really so? (*The Prince remains silent.*) Yes, I think I understand.

(*Both of them are silent. Jean-Jacques has returned to his place near the irregular stone block.*)

JEAN-JACQUES
(*After a pause*)

I met my sister just a moment ago, while I was coming up here. She never saw me . . . And your son who was going down the hill on the other side—he didn't see me either . . .

THE PRINCE
(*Smiling*)

But you saw *them*. You see everything.

JEAN-JACQUES

I couldn't help seeing. I couldn't avoid it . . . How they torture themselves! How everyone tortures himself!

THE PRINCE

That's the way with life!

JEAN-JACQUES

(*Pointing out the cross between the lance and the sponge on the stick, opposite them*)

Like that thing there. The cross. The lance. And the vinegar on the sponge . . . How strange it is! And how true!

THE PRINCE

(*Following the direction of his gesture*)

Yes, they weren't even able, those people, to carve the Son of God with the instruments of his Passion: the turnspit and the cruet.

JEAN-JACQUES

It goes through my body, just like that. The lance and the gall must come to everyone. It is myself I see there.

THE PRINCE

It is you; it is I. You are right.

JEAN-JACQUES

(*Turning and looking back at the enormous irregular boulder*)

And that great monster there, what is it?

THE PRINCE

It was thrown up by the earth in the dim past. Look, it is still red and fiery, that rock from the earth's entrails. Men without knowledge of art have set it up, like a deformed God opposite the God without form. In Italy, they would have built in this beautiful place a round temple with Doric colonnades. At Courtenay, a Daphne in the embrace of her blonde God; an imitation of the classic, but gallantly done, less unsophisticated than the original.

JEAN-JACQUES

I feel closer to that God without eyes. I do not know whether it has a soul or not. But I can feel its flesh.

THE PRINCE

It is naked. The robe of life has slipped down from its hips.

JEAN-JACQUES

It is slipping from me, too. I am trying to hold it.

THE PRINCE

(Taking his hand affectionately)

I will hold you.

JEAN-JACQUES

(*In a low voice*)

How beautiful it will be when everything has slipped off. What calm!

THE PRINCE

Nonsense! That's no kind of talk for a child. I prefer you as a gourmand of life.

JEAN-JACQUES

It's another kind of appetite. For the silence. The most beautiful music of all. And the utter stillness. Never to have to move again. Never to have to hate . . .

THE PRINCE

What do you mean—speaking of hatred? That's not your business. And what good does it do to talk as you have been talking? You are tired of the race before you have started!

JEAN-JACQUES

It hurts me to see you so agitated! All sorts of people running up and down the streets, crying and gesticulating . . . What horrible cries! Even here, in the night, they stab through my head. And everyone at each

other's throats. Even now when I see a couple of simple people talking together, I expect one of them to begin suddenly to shout and then see them fling themselves at each other.

THE PRINCE

It was like a madness. One dog biting the other. One must beat them off.

JEAN-JACQUES

(*Without looking at the Prince*)

They should beat me as well.

THE PRINCE

You, my child? Whom have you bitten?

JEAN-JACQUES

Oh! It is in my blood. How well I know it!

THE PRINCE

What?

JEAN-JACQUES

That madness . . . I, too, I know what it is to hate. I, too, have been poisoned . . . Every now and then it appears . . . Oh! how it disgusts me!

THE PRINCE

What is it that you hate?

JEAN-JACQUES

I hardly know. The world. And myself . . . It comes from there, all in a moment. (*He lays his hand on the hollow of his chest.*) It burns. It is like a terrible pain, taking its vengeance on me. One never knows when one is seized by that red whirlpool what it is really that one wants to destroy . . .

THE PRINCE

But what is it?

JEAN-JACQUES

I don't know. It makes no difference. Whether man or beast . . . Oh! I am infected! They ought to do away with me! . . . Once, on the Pont-au-Change, I saw . . . No! I can't speak of it . . .

THE PRINCE

Tell me about it! It will do you good.

JEAN-JACQUES

I saw a man hunted down . . . They told me afterwards that it was a brigand . . . Perhaps . . . I can believe that. But a man just the same. The face of a wolf, yellow and

dirty, with a fifteen days' growth of beard on it . . . His mouth hung open with fear. Some of his teeth were missing . . . His mean, wretched little eyes shone with hate and fear . . . The mob rushed on him, happy like all cowards when the odds are twenty to one—the pack of hounds—their pikes lowered and their pitch-forks ready. I stood there frozen to the ground. Something in my throat cried out "No." It cried also, "Yes . . . Strike him down, strike him . . ." Not a sound came out. Monsieur, I saw the blow . . . And I would have liked to have been one of those prongs tearing his flesh . . . (*Pausing for a moment. When he begins to speak again, his voice has changed; there is a note of physical anguish in it.*) And it was in my own stomach that I felt that fork . . . I lost consciousness . . . It has always made me sick, afterwards . . . I feel the teeth of that fork . . . That horrible urgency . . . Kill, kill! . . . And it was me whom they killed!

THE PRINCE

(*Moving close to him, compassionately*)

Yes, the soul has its demons. In the periods of calm, when reason rules, a veil seems to

cover them. The veil was snatched aside too soon for your childish eyes. They were burned.

JEAN-JACQUES

But must it be that way always, before and behind the veil? . . . Oh, yes, I know . . . Even behind the veil of this Autumn, these silent trees, the fork is plunged into the entrails . . . It is that which they call "the tragedy of life." (*After a brief pause, unexpectedly.*) Monsieur, you have killed?

THE PRINCE

(*He starts. Then rises and walks off without replying. He strides along the terrace, returns to the child and says:*)

I have.

JEAN-JACQUES

Sit close to me. (*The Prince sits down close to the child. Jean-Jacques takes his hand, sympathetically.*) I thought so.

THE PRINCE

(*Involuntarily, discarding the familiar pronoun*)

What do you know of that?

JEAN-JACQUES

I? Nothing. But I have noticed things. It is written . . . (*The Prince starts to make a gesture of defense.*) Oh! It is written on almost every face today. In action or in reflection. It is the same.

THE PRINCE

No, my child.

JEAN-JACQUES

But it is that way, Monsieur.

THE PRINCE

One is master of one's actions, even if not of one's thoughts.

JEAN-JACQUES

No more of one than of the other—that is what I think. But whether one is master of them or not, one is responsible for both of them.

THE PRINCE

That is true. You speak like a man. One should not shirk a part of one's responsibility. We must accept all of it. I will not disavow the crimes of my thoughts.

JEAN-JACQUES

You are a strong man. You can take everything on your shoulders. The burden is too heavy for me. I cannot carry it. I cannot play my part in life. There are too many crimes everywhere. One can put up with those of which one is the victim. But those of which one is the cause? The sufferings of others? Even to fight them one must fight with others; one must cause suffering. I know well enough that a real man should be armored against all sorts of cruelty. I am not. I am not a real man. I shall not have the time to become one. (*In a low voice.*) So much the better! (*In the same tone as before.*) How beautiful it would be to do away with at least a little part of the world's cruelties through one's own sufferings, as my mother told me the Lamb had come to do . . . *Agnus Dei qui tollis*. He at least was happy. But he really accomplished nothing . . . What could I do, a small boy, weak and sickly? Good for nothing! I have done nothing. What good am I?

THE PRINCE

You have joined together the hands of enemies. (*He bends over to kiss the child.*)

JEAN-JACQUES

(*Tenderly, while he returns the kiss*)

Pardon the evil that we have done you.

THE PRINCE

We could hardly reckon the evil that we ourselves have done. It is too much! The record is squared! . . . Come, it is time to get back. The cloud-mantle has fallen over the mountains. While we have been talking, the mist has stolen through the forest silent as a wolf. Your hair is wet. Get up! [1]

JEAN-JACQUES

(*Embracing a slender young birch-tree which grows in the shadow of the irregular boulder*)

I love this white birch. Its young body shivers. . . . Ah, here come the clouds. An Arctic sea surrounds us. I can hardly see its branches through the mist; but I press my warm cheek against its frozen limbs. The sky is dead. The earth is drowned. We go back into the dim past. It is almost as if I were returning to the age of that great thing there.

[1] The change of scene indicated by the Prince takes place during his speech, and even precedes it a little, going back to the words of Jean-Jacques: "So much the better." The light dwindles and the fog steals across the scene.

(*He points out the irregular boulder.*) When the sea still covered the life that was to come . . .

THE PRINCE

Dreamer! Would you renew the whole cycle of the earth?

JEAN-JACQUES

Oh, no. My legs are tired. I have been walking all day long. I am sleepy. Here lies Jacquot . . . (*He stretches himself out.*)

THE PRINCE

(*Taking him in his arms*)

I will carry you.

(*The voices of the young peasants are heard, descending the mountain singing the "Weihnachtslied" of Soleure.*[1])

JEAN-JACQUES

There go the village girls on their way back. (*He draws back, unwilling to let himself be carried.*) No, no! What will they say when they see me being carried?

THE PRINCE

Listen!

[1] The "Christmas Song."

JEAN-JACQUES

What are they singing?

THE PRINCE

(*Tenderly*)

"Sleep well, little man of sorrow." (*The chorus of invisible girls sings:* "Schlaf wohl, du süsses Kind.")

ACT III

November, 1797. The same place.

A little before one o'clock at night. Snow on the ground. The sky clear, swarming with stars. (The moon rises later, toward the close.) It is cold, with a north wind. The spot is sheltered. The wind sways the high branches of the beech trees. On the mountain behind the pines rise.

Below, Soleure, lighted up. The little lights blinking out on the plain seem to signal back to those gleaming in the sky. Above and below, there is the same ant-hill agitation.

At the right of the irregular boulder, at the foot of the leafless birch tree, rises the little killock of an unadorned grave. The snow-mantle covers the swelling in the ground, like white covers drawn over a figure on a bed. A metal cross in the form of a four-leaf clover has been set into the white trunk of the birch beyond the mound.

The Count, carrying a lantern, comes up from the path to the right. Manon clings to his

hand. They stop as they enter to light the way for the Prince, who has Mathew Regnault by the arm. All four of them are dressed warmly, and as though for travelling.

The Prince wears a great Roman mantle (à la Goethe), open wide. Less inured to the cold, Regnault is buttoned up in his long overcoat.

The Count sets his lantern on the head of the little burial mound. Manon kneels at the foot. Regnault and the Prince, with bared heads, stand in front. Not a word is spoken. No expression of emotion. Each one keeps his pain and his thoughts to himself.

In this instant of silence and immobility (which should not be too long drawn out) the vault of heaven is cut through by a shooting star. With the mournful sighing of the pine trees, the bells of the city and the villages far off in the valley, mount on the air. A murmuring of voices, smothered by the wind, also rises in brief snatches.

The Prince has taken Regnault's arm again, and leads him over to the stone bench to the right, in a corner sheltered by the mass of the irregular boulder, looking down on the valley. Manon has risen and, with her hand clasped in the hand of the Count, keeps close

to him at the other end of the terrace and looks out at the night.

Scene I

THE PRINCE

Here one is sheltered from the north wind. The trees and the mountains screen us off. Listen to the wind howling!

REGNAULT

The night is cold and clear.

(*Manon comes over silently, and unfastens the collar of her father's coat. At that instant another star shoots across the sky.*)

MANON

(*With a soft cry*)

Ah. A shooting star!

THE PRINCE

The November night is full of dying worlds.

THE COUNT

The wind has swept the sky clean. We shall have a beautiful day tomorrow for our long journey.

MANON

Tomorrow has already begun.

REGNAULT

What time is it?

MANON

The half hour after midnight sounded from St. Urs while we were climbing up here.

REGNAULT

If the wind has swept the uncleanness from the sky, it has fallen on the earth. (*He points down at Soleure and the illuminated streets.*) And no wind would ever be strong enough to clean that up!

THE PRINCE

That human dust down there, how it whirls! All those little lights, winking in the wind, seem to have run out on the plain like souls without a body.

MANON

Like bodies without a soul.

THE COUNT

They are waiting for it.

REGNAULT

For what?

THE COUNT

(*Ironically*)

Their soul . . . Their Bonaparte!

REGNAULT

Yes. The fools! The fools!

(*The sound of footsteps is heard on the path to the right.*)

THE COUNT

Who goes there?

Scene II

(*Schultheiss Wallier appears*)

SCHULTHEISS

It is I, Schultheiss Wallier . . . I have followed you, gentlemen. (*He notices Manon and salutes her.*) Mademoiselle . . . Before saying good-bye to you, I wanted to spend a few moments of peace while awaiting the arrival of that brigand.

THE PRINCE

What's this? Do you mean to say that you are not overwhelmed, you too, by the prospect of licking his boots?

SCHULTHEISS

Don't joke about it! You know how I detest that firebrand and his tools. Never in my life have I been so humiliated as at the prospect of holding his stirrup for him.

THE PRINCE

(*In the same ironical tone*)

Ah, but the glory, Monsieur, the glory!

SCHULTHEISS

Glory! . . . I doubt it . . . My country has no glory. I am proud of her. Her sane freedom is worth all the victories of all the armies.

REGNAULT

I'd be the last one to dispute that, Monsieur.

SCHULTHEISS

It is you none the less, Monsieur, who have sown the dragon's teeth in the fields of Europe.

THE PRINCE

If they have grown in your soil, it must mean that your soil has also a bit of the dragon's flesh about it.

SCHULTHEISS

That's quite possible. We have a bit of everything here. But we thought to have stamped that kind of thing out. We thought that the last drop of that blood was spilled at Marignan. So much of our spleen finds an outlet in foreign service. At home, one takes one's place, one's rank, on the bench, in the traditional manner, one's task, whether at home or in the Council—all roads leading to the tomb. Our sons follow in the footsteps of their fathers. And the succeeding centuries follow each other in the same track. Our town, older than the oldest empires, took pride in the fact that it has kept within the same limits for five centuries. The sickness of growth, the folly of change, all those things that pass under the head of progress and glory, never even touched it. One holds to what one has, needing nothing else. Altogether, we were like an old family where advancement was a natural process according to age, custom and services rendered. And the entire middle class came together, once a year, established in their sovereign power, in the *Rosengarten,* with roses

in their hands. We have no need, gentlemen, of those French trouble-makers who are unable to sleep in their beds because they are as badly made as you want us to make ours . . . (*He checks himself and moderates his tone.*) But I am going out of my way, Monsieur, for your own bed was rather mussed up by those people over there . . . And you, Monsieur (*addressing Regnault*), whatever my grievances against you, I cannot forget how at the Convention you made Condorcet's word your own, scoring in advance that conquering and rapacious pseudo-Republic, after the manner of the ancients: "the rule of one faction over all other factions—the most hateful of all tyrannies."

REGNAULT

(*Straightening*)

I said to him: "Shall an ambitious man promise our soldiers, as though he were speaking to citizens of Rome, the plunder of Spain and Syria? . . . No! For we cannot remain a free people by refusing to be a sovereign people!" [1]

[1] These words are taken over literally from the first great Republican manifesto of Condorcet in 1791.

SCHULTHEISS

And there's the answer for you! (*He indicates the city from which the clamor of voices and songs is drifting.*)

THE PRINCE

But the interesting part of it, Schultheiss, is that it is being made by those who are getting ready to be devoured.

SCHULTHEISS

The unhappy fools! In acclaiming the sovereign people they seem to think that they are going to share in the royalty.

MANON

(*Pointing toward the town*)

It's humming like a hive.

THE PRINCE

A hive all dressed up to receive hornets of a kind that have never been seen before.

SCHULTHEISS

I know, I know—all they want, under cover of their high-flown words and their dusty liberty, is our honey. The vast treasure of Berne

is giving your beggarly Directorate a squint and burns the bellies of your Italian soldiers who only go where the wine of glory flows freely. They won't have any rest until they have it in their hands But those idiots (*he indicates the town*) are all waiting for the cake to be passed around. They seem to think that the long sword of Bonaparte has come for no other purpose than to cut it for them . . . It's a terrible thing to see one's country ruined by its own folly, *gratis pro Deo!* And to be helpless to stop it. Supposing we were to try? We are only a handful. We should be swept away; and our attempt at opposition would give Bonaparte a pretext for intervening in our affairs and hurrying the occupation. That is what he is counting on, he and Reubel. Our city is full of their *agents provocateurs*. The only thing left for us is to take part in the merrymaking with death in our hearts, hold on to the initiative at the mad reception, for fear someone will take it from us, and prepare a fat banquet for those long teeth, and our white sheets for their filthy bodies. Nothing could be good enough for those mangy fellows!

THE PRINCE

When do they expect him?

SCHULTHEISS

Some time during the night. One never knows with him. Like the sparrowhawk that circles around above the plain, likely at any moment to swoop down on the hen roost. He left Lausanne during the evening. He reached Basle by the direct route. Just now, he ought to be somewhere near Neuchatel. The fires on the hills and the cannon will announce him . . . But I am losing precious moments, Messieurs. I only intended to slip away for half an hour from those sickening frenzies down there! And I have come, whether I want to or not, to ask you to excuse me for the necessity I am under of turning you out of our country.

THE PRINCE

I've won my wager, Monsieur. Just as I told you! Well, at least I can recommend to you the fields that we have sown.

SCHULTHEISS

I'm not the one who will eat the wheat from them.

THE PRINCE

I can well believe it. . . . But as the proverb says: "Whatever is well planted comes

back again." Let the bird of prey pass. The field remains.

SCHULTHEISS

And we, under it.

THE PPINCE

Oh, come now, don't complain of that. That's a stroke of fortune that we, wandering Jews, could never hope for.

SCHULTHEISS

Monsieur, I admire your philosophy.

THE PRINCE

Stop drinking when the glass is empty—that's the best philosophy.

SCHULTHEISS

But I don't like it when someone else keeps on drinking out of it.

THE COUNT

(*Brusquely—with a hint of impatience*)

Then break the glass. Do like Morat's people! (*He points off toward the distant plains.*)

SCHULTHEISS

Yes, he never had his drink, your Duke of Bourgogne! They muzzled him up too quick.

. . . But the people of that period would have set fire to their city in order to set the cinders free . . . It is too much to ask of us. Down there, in the mountains of the forest Cantons, you can still find enough of the real, old Swiss people, poor, untutored who might still turn their villages into funeral pyres. . . . But life is too gentle, here; we like it, we respect it . . .

THE PRINCE

Life is like one of those women who have no use for the men who respect them.

SCHULTHEISS

(*Gravely*)

I am too old to do without the amenities.

THE PRINCE

(*Pressing his hand*)

We have found many of them in you, Schultheiss; we could no more forget them than the water of your fountains or the milk of your herds.

SCHULTHEISS

I am ashamed to seem lacking in hospitality. But you have been denounced, gentlemen. The town is restless; you have compromised us

there. I must sacrifice you to the good of the community. When do you intend to go?

THE PRINCE

At dawn.

SCHULTHEISS

Before, if possible. I would rather that you did not appear again within the limits of the city. I fear for your safety in the midst of that rabble stirred up by too much loose talk and wine. Where do you intend to go?

THE PRINCE

To Hamburg. But that won't be our last stage.

SCHULTHEISS

If I could help you any under the painful circumstances to which I am reduced, it would be some consolation for my inability to give you refuge.

THE PRINCE

Schultheiss, we have need neither for protection nor for security. We ask our rights. They have been taken away from us. That doesn't surprise us at all. Since, my dear Regnault, you have solemnly declared the Rights of Man, they have been entirely confiscated.

The only right that still remains to man is brute force. We must accommodate ourselves to that breeze. There is nothing to do but wrap ourselves in our cloaks. Don't worry about us. Our mantles—and beneath them our hearts—are warm.

REGNAULT

For my part, Schultheiss, I shall not refuse your offer. My heart is less warm since the blood has flowed out of it, and the cold pierces me more deeply. I shall ask a favor of you. I am leaving my poor child in the ground there. (*He indicates the grave-mound.*) May that ground be gentle to him! Protect his repose!

SCHULTHEISS

(*Gravely*)

Nothing shall disturb him. The city and the forest will guard him.

THE COUNT

(*Who has been watching the horizon*)

Look—those fires!

(*A glow of light, then a second, then a line of fires, spreading from mountain to mountain, appear on the distant hills. The nearer fires glow more brightly.*)

SCHULTHEISS

(*Startled*)

The signal fires! Already?

THE COUNT

Look how they are striding along!

SCHULTHEISS

The wizard must have put on his seven-league boots.

(*The sound of cannon is heard.*)

A VOICE

(*From below*)

Schultheiss! Schultheiss Wallier!

SCHULTHEISS

(*Leaning over the balustrade of the terrace*)

Hallo there!

THE VOICE

He's coming! He's coming! He has already come past Biberist!

SCHULTHEISS

What! What? Bienne has failed to warn us.

THE VOICE

He didn't come along the road we expected. He took another side path.

SCHULTHEISS

(*Overcome and beside himself*)

Thunder and lightning!

THE PRINCE

(*Ironically*)

Run along and greet the little Thunder God.

SCHULTHEISS

(*To the voice below*)

I'm coming! . . . (*To the group*) Good-bye, gentlemen. (*He hurries off.*)

Scene III

(*The same four, without the Schultheiss*)

THE PRINCE

(*Watching the Schultheiss descend*)

There is nothing more pitiful than a brave man without power who wants to play cat and mouse with power and gets the claws himself. (*The sound of cannon is heard from far off, growing more distinct at each discharge.*)

REGNAULT

Fate is on the march.

THE PRINCE

And you are the one who let it loose.

REGNAULT

You had a hand in it, too.

THE PRINCE

Perhaps. I consented to it.

(*The three men who have drawn together gaze out at the rapidly spreading watch-fires and look at each other.*)

REGNAULT

You are smiling?

THE PRINCE

You, too.

THE COUNT

Must we speak our thoughts?

THE PRINCE

What good would it do? We have read the writing on the wall together.

REGNAULT

I will say it, then—not to you, but to myself, if only for the relief it will bring—to myself, and to the night out there that we have sown with seeds of fire and cannon-shots. That firebrand approaching, that monster, that Geryon —all is sprung from us. We set the spark to the powder. All this is born of the awakening of our glorious race, from the fever of its blood and its victory—the offspring of the orgiastic mating of despotism and liberty.

THE PRINCE

And you are not ashamed to hold that long-toothed infant for the baptism ceremony!

REGNAULT

I'd rather drown it in the bowl. But it has gone out of our hands. And all the water in that river down there would hardly be enough. The spear is flung.

THE PRINCE

It needed a strong arm to throw it!

REGNAULT

The arm is ours.

THE PRINCE

But it has missed the target we aimed at.

REGNAULT

It has come back on us instead. And who can say, now, where the target is? That man riding through the night out there seems to think he knows. But he knows less than we do, for he is the spear himself!

THE PRINCE

In the meantime, let's watch his trajectory! (*The cannon re-echo again from Soleure.*)

REGNAULT

It will pass along straight across the old abuses which will never again be remedied

THE PRINCE

It is finished, I'm afraid, the rule of the citizens with roses in their hands!

REGNAULT

That rose had its thorns. In that musical-comedy Assembly in which every citizen had the right to the flower, the flower effaced all the other rights. They had no right even to speak.

THE PRINCE

They will make up for that tonight.
(*The hubbub rises from below.*)

REGNAULT

And some beside! Strange! . . . That good man who has just left us, that Schultheiss and most of his colleagues in the great and petty councils are a hundred times better men than that bandit who is coming on us like a thunderbolt tonight and his partners, those rascals in the Directory. And still it is just those, the rascals and the thunderbolt, who are working for the future.

THE PRINCE

And what moral do you wish to draw from that?

REGNAULT

Simply that the invisible Power which holds us uses for its ends, whenever it so wishes, the most inscrutable instruments.

THE PRINCE

Ah, yes. I forgot that you were one of the worshipers of the new God who has put the others out of business. Progress!

REGNAULT

It is a poor, tottering, decrepit God, with sad, intrepid eyes—I imagine him a little like my poor little boy and the flame that burned in his frail little body; he may die also, I know; the flame so often wavers, like the flame of that lantern; our stupidity is enough to blow it out. He is threatened and betrayed by everyone of us; I myself have betrayed him. How well I remember—the shame and regret have never left me—the day, the tragic hour, when all of us shamefully abandoned him. It was in the Assembly. Wise Condorcet was speaking from the Tribune. He unfolded his noble plan for the future of the race. He spoke of linking *peace and liberty with immortal chains;* and full knowing the wolf that lurks behind the mask of the man, he played on those ravenous hungers and greeds and brought them out on the smooth, broad harvest plains. Under his magic persuasion we saw the tall grain of Progress brought to harvest by the rhythm of serene labor, and the fields stretching off to the invisible future as under a Mediterranean sky. . . . The King, your King, entered, conducted by Dumouriez. That great, impotent

ram of a man[1] led on that poor, peevish dog with his head hanging, throwing his false glances here and there about the Assembly. The King began to talk, bleating out the words that had been dictated to him. War! To blot out the light of the Revolution. Those words of his lay like clouds over the serene fields of Condorcet. . . . He, wise one, kept silent. The rest of us felt the brute within surge up at the first words. We shouted for glory! We paid no heed to the death-mask face. And that night slavery, helmeted and booted, drove its bloody spurs into the flanks of the Republic.

THE PRINCE

And despite all this you still cherish hopes?

REGNAULT

I have betrayed the Master. I am not the first to have done so. But ever and always he comes back again.

[1] Action here: The Count starts with indignation. The Prince raises a hand in protest. But before he can speak, Manon comes up to her father and lays a hand on his arm. Regnault checks himself, looks around and says gravely: "That is right. One should respect the dead. He has paid." And he substitutes for his previous remark: "the volitionless king," etc.

THE PRINCE

One can't dispute with preachers! The ones in my day were somewhat less religious than you Jacobins! . . . And we have enough to face as it is without quarreling among ourselves. Let each believe as he wishes. No matter how you arrange your thoughts, they are familiar enough to me. There is hope and bitterness both in lives such as ours, lives of action, of manful striving, scarred by wounds. We have conquered in vain, have been conquered in turn, twenty times, and still keep on fighting. And whatever is happening yonder, whether in the name of God or the Devil or Progress or Force or Life or Death—the one thing sure to come is Fire. And the more I feel it burning around me and in me, I say: "All honor to the flame!"—just as in the dawn days when man grasped it from the Stone-Age night. Whatever the hands that bring it, it is still fire. And over it, I am warmed again and brought back to life.

THE COUNT

Feast your eyes on it, then! Look there! Look at that, coming down the road.

MANON

That running ribbon of fire . . .

THE COUNT

It's the escort. With torches . . .

MANON

I can hear the hoofbeats.

THE COUNT

And the carriage between the torches . . .

REGNAULT

The ant-hill is swarming!

THE PRINCE

They have come out of their holes, everyone of them. The females with their eggs. They are zig-zagging up and down. They are not going on. They are turning.

THE COUNT

Those outcries, the bells, the cannon.

(*During these remarks the symphony of cries, bells and cannon rolls out. The hills around the city are lit up with fires, and the tops of*

the towers shine out. The lights and the noise rise to a climax.)

REGNAULT

What fools men are!

THE PRINCE

We are men.

REGNAULT

Yes, the madness increases, like the noise.

THE PRINCE

I can smell it coming up in gusts with the acrid smell of the ant-hill.

THE COUNT

They are coming to the gates.

MANON

They are entering.

THE COUNT

They are inside, now.

THE PRINCE

But what has our friend the Schultheiss done about his speech? He should have stopped the guest at the gates to overwhelm him with his eloquence.

THE COUNT

While offering him bread and salt on a tray.

MANON

And a rose.

THE PRINCE

Bandits don't eat roses. They want gold and laurels.

REGNAULT

At what inn is he to stay?

THE COUNT

At the Sign of the Crown.

THE PRINCE

Ha! An omen. . . . *Macbeth, thou shalt be King!* . . . (*To Regnault*) You have read Shakespeare?

REGNAULT

I have no use for barbarians.

THE PRINCE

(*With irony*)

I have no doubt! The classic age stopped with the Revolution.

MANON

I can't see them any more. The curtain is drawn. The tall roofs of the houses hide them.

THE COUNT

They must have arrived at the hotel by this time.

THE PRINCE

Speeches, banquet, dancing and fireworks. What a program. It will go on all night.

MANON

This beautiful Winter night! Our last one, here! . . . Its silence is shattered like the surface of a pond by a stone.
(*A sudden silence follows.*)

THE COUNT

Your outcry has been heard. The frogs have stopped croaking. They have dived into the water.

MANON

What is happening?

THE PRINCE

The clown is speaking. The thin little heron.

REGNAULT

It's astonishing—such a silence.

THE PRINCE

Wait until the end of the couplet! You'll hear enough afterward.

(*They wait for a few moments. Complete silence. The impression is accentuated by the sighing of the wind in the pines.*)

MANON

Only the wind speaks.

THE COUNT

It has swept away that outburst of eloquence.

MANON

And they said . . . But look! . . . How it blows those torches about.

THE COUNT

The fires on the hills are dying.

MANON

The eyes of the houses are closing.

(*The stage settings change to follow these remarks.*)

THE PRINCE

Where is the cause of all this, then?

THE COUNT

Look, look, father! . . . On the other side of the city, at the Basle gate. Just below us.

THE PRINCE

They are coming out again.

MANON

The escort and the carriage.

REGNAULT

Bonaparte is leaving.

THE PRINCE

He isn't going to stop here!

(*A startled silence. The wind carries up an indistinct clamor from the village, without gayety, without cries, without songs. Then this falls to silence. The only sounds are the hoofbeats of the escort and the rolling of the wagon wheels, passing off and receding into the distances of the plain.*)

THE COUNT

And all those preparations for dancing and festivity?

THE PRINCE

And our old notary?

REGNAULT

The Schultheiss and Kulli have stayed behind, to rub noses . . .

MANON

Oh, if I could only have seen everything without being seen!

THE PRINCE

Patience! One of my people is coming to tell us about it.

THE COUNT

The shadow is spreading over the face of the city. All this side—one whole quarter—has fallen to silence.

THE PRINCE

I hear someone coming up. . . . Is that you, Berry? (*He leans down over the balcony of the terrace.*)

Scene IV

(*Berry remains invisible. He stays in the shadow, beneath the wall, but his voice is just as distinct as though he were on the stage.*)

BERRY

Yes, Monseigneur.

THE PRINCE

You were there? You saw everything?

BERRY

I saw it all right.

THE PRINCE

Tell us about it.

BERRY

(*Shouting with laughter*)

Oh, Monseigneur, if you could have seen their expressions! They pulled such long faces that they couldn't get them back into their houses again. They hung them up at the doors. The wind, blowing in gusts, turned them upside down like so many ships in a gale.

THE PRINCE

Come, come, no more nonsense! Tell us what happened!

BERRY

Well then, Monseigneur, that Bonaparte—a regular pike! Sharp teeth and a flat stomach . . . That coxcomb! . . . He knocked them all out in four or five stiff phrases, his hands behind his back . . . I got the blow right in the stomach.

THE PRINCE

You saw him close by?

BERRY

As close as I am to you. Rather yellowish about the eyes. A few wisps of dingy black hair over his brow. A skin like the parchment of a drum, tightened the wrong way: the rough places showing. He is all bone, emaciated, no higher than a hop-pole. One could break him over one's knee . . . Oh, yes. Try it! . . . When he looks at you, it knocks the breath out of you. You get it in the eye! It's like the blow of a fist. He doesn't need to move his arms . . . He keeps his lips tight . . . He doesn't unbutton them even to speak . . . He

throws a couple of words at you. He stinks like Corsica. It comes out of his nose . . . a smell of fish and garlic soup. . . . Bruummm! You get your laughter back in your throat. You stand with your mouth open. And for a while you're lucky if you don't find yourself shaking in your shoes.

THE PRINCE

Come! . . . You can spare us your personal reactions! I asked you what that Bonaparte said. Why didn't he stop here?

BERRY

Everyone was waiting for him before the door of the Crown. On one side, the Grand Councillors, and on the other, the Petty Councillors. The "Patriots" all in cockades. The Corporations massed on the great stairway of St. Urs: the hotelkeepers, the coopers, the boatmen, the millers, the gardeners, and the butchers . . . (*The Prince arrests further enumeration with a gesture.*) . . . And the young girls with flowers. The coach had hardly arrived in the midst of the shouting and singing when the Grossweibel [1] rushed down

[1] Pronounce in the French manner.

with his golden chain and his rod to open the door. . . . And all around the people waiting, murmuring . . . No one came out. Instead he sank back into a corner, sullenly. Outside, our Schultheiss was wearing himself out, bowing and smiling. Finally when the other never moved, he decided to begin warbling his compliments. He has just about finished the preliminary salaams when a dry hand shot out of the shadows and a harsh voice called out: "Enough!" The Schultheiss broke off in the middle of what he was doing. As for us, we stood there gasping. . . . Finally the fellow got out of the coach. I saw him, just as I told you. He took five steps toward the Schultheiss, who took as many backward. And buttoned up to the chin in his riding coat, standing on his spurs like a black cock, he said: "All right, there. Let's have it. Come, hand over the paper. Berthier will read it . . . Schultheiss, speeches are no good these days. People who act have nothing to say. There's been too much talking for the last ten years. But thank you all the same, gentlemen of the town and the council. The Republic takes your reception kindly. I greet you . . . But I don't see the Stadtvenner, your military expert, among

you . . . I know, I know, he's a little unsympathetic. So I've been told . . . You too, Schultheiss, you are a bit lukewarm, you don't show much sympathy toward the true friends of liberty . . . I know the whole story. But you may be held accountable some day! Look well in the future! . . . Good evening, gentlemen! Stir those horses up. I'm in a hurry! . . ."

The Patriots, taken aback, pressed around him and began talking all at once. He said: "I don't like disorder. Let one of you speak for the rest!" The old notary, Kulli, began to speak: He stammered, too timid to speak out straight: he had his little speech by heart, but his fire was rather damp. The raven eye took him in from tip to toe. It didn't take long! "Who are you? The Notary? . . . What are you doing, dangling a saber? You're a bit old for masquerades . . . They tell me that you're a Patriot. Excellent. But save the gestures for your study! It's a bad state of affairs in a State when civilians play at soldiering." Someone spoke up: "But the banquet?" He went on: "It's one o'clock in the morning. A bad time to eat! The place for you, ladies, at such an hour is in bed. If I could, I'd turn in

myself. But politics waits for no man. I have to be in Basle in the morning. . . ." Someone offered him a glass of wine. He said: "Bring me a glass of water." On the step of the carriage he turned and spoke up again with an expression like that of a wolf in a sheepfold: "No use in saying good-bye, gentlemen. I'll see you again before long." . . . The coach started off. We stood around there, bareheaded, without moving. No one dared look the other in the face. The "Patriots," nothing daunted, went into The Crown and began the banquet. They needed something to cheer them up! But they had some trouble in swallowing. . . . And the burghers joined their wives and dogs without a word, their heads hanging and their tails between their legs. . . . *"By the moonlight . . . my candle is dead."*

MANON

There's nothing left but one great eye up there in the tower.

(*The signal light on the highest tower is seen slowly dying out. The city has disappeared in the shadows.*)

THE COUNT

The eye is closing. The city sleeps.

REGNAULT

But the confusion and the noise continue.

THE PRINCE

And the night is taking the earth to itself. The road is free, now. Berry, get the horses ready. It is time to go. . . .

(*A moment of silence while Berry, invisible, stumbles off down the hill.*)

Scene V

(*The four are alone again*)

THE COUNT

Manon, it is fitting that we should take the world to witness the resolution our hearts have made. (*To the Prince and Regnault.*) My father, and you, Monsieur, will hear it without surprise. . . . (*To Manon.*) We go hand in hand on the road of exile since that is the road of our life.

MANON

All that is mine is yours. All that is yours is mine.

THE COUNT

All that I have, Manon, all that I have to offer you, is not the happiness of hearth and home, but the long, hard road.

MANON

My feet will never tire of following you. Heaven grant that they may share for a long life the dust of the earth with yours until the day when both of us mingle our dust with it.

THE PRINCE

Where do you plan to go?

THE COUNT

Across the sea. At Hamburg, where we shall go with you, we shall take ship for America. There there are still free horizons. The earth and men's thoughts are new; they do not have to bear the weight of the bloody centuries of Europe. There one stands face to face with Nature, like Adam in the dawn of the world. There we shall try to found anew a race of Courtenays who will lay their claims to nobility not on the past but on the future. Manon and I are strong and we will spare ourselves no effort. The rude school of our youth has made our muscles and our hearts patient and strong. All that we ask is the aid of Heaven in the adventure we are about to make. And whether it helps us or not, we will know how to help ourselves.

MANON

Heaven is within us.

THE PRINCE

(*With ironical affection*)

As all youth must think in its day.

REGNAULT

I believe it. Your union is a victory—the overriding of prejudice by reason and by love.

THE PRINCE

(*In the same tone*)

There will be others to take its place! (*To Manon.*) It is for you then, a little girl, that we have suffered and made others suffer—all Europe in flames, and thrones and centuries destroyed. Thousands sacrificed, for your happiness, for your New World!

MANON

Our New World with its happiness and pain is the world of millions to come.

THE PRINCE

(*In the same tone*)

The promised land!

REGNAULT

(*Gesturing toward the grave of his son*)

There is the promised land! For everyone in his day.

VOICE OF BERRY

(*From below*)

Monseigneur, everything is ready.

REGNAULT

(*Takes several steps toward the tomb. The others group themselves around it*)

Good-bye, my little boy. You will have time, now, for your dreams.

THE PRINCE

Patience! A few short months now, and the Spring that you longed for will visit you.

THE COUNT

You have become the spirit of this place, between the rock and the cross!

MANON

You will be born again in me, happier and stronger. I take you in my arms.

(*They prepare to leave.*)

THE COUNT

Wrap yourself warmly, Manon. The wind is blowing harder.

MANON

I love it. It's solemn organ notes in the forest.

THE COUNT

The lights of Heaven are blowing about like grass in a gale.

REGNAULT

(*To the Prince*)

Do you remember the north wind that blew at Courtenay on the eve of Palm Sunday?

THE PRINCE

Twenty-three years ago.

REGNAULT

Centuries.

THE PRINCE

A few months, rather. The Spring and the Autumn of the same year for humanity.

REGNAULT

And the scattered harvest?

MANON

In us.

THE COUNT

In everyone. A share for everyone.

REGNAULT

A share of the tears.

THE COUNT

"He who sows in tears shall reap in happiness."

REGNAULT

In that case, the happiness may well be great!

THE PRINCE

To do you justice, Regnault, you have spared neither yourself nor us.

MANON

The pain will bring the harvest.

THE PRINCE

This little girl will end by making us love our misfortunes.

THE COUNT

They are the wheat from which her white hands shall make the bread.

THE PRINCE

And you will eat it, lucky rascal!

(*Suddenly the somber arch of the sky is lit up by a rain of sparkling stars spreading out in clusters. Manon, the Count, and Berry, below the terrace, cry out in astonishment.*)

MANON

Look!

THE COUNT

The Harvester up there never spares the seed.

MANON

It is raining fire!

THE PRINCE

The *Léonides*. The great artificer of Heaven, November, is throwing handfuls of gold through the night. . . . The debris of a constellation, the noble dust of a world destroyed . . .

REGNAULT

(*Carried away*)

Our world. From the four quarters of the sky an invisible hand throws us on the universe.

THE PRINCE

Why not? . . . We are too used to thinking that life is a quiet river of our own, winding forever through the same valley, through the same fields. Perhaps, after all, we are born to be dispersed to all the corners of the earth, to propagate our blood and our ideas . . . Ah, well, we are ready! We will do as our grandfathers did at the time of the migrations. Up in the sky there you can see the symbolic chariot that served them for a home. Once more it is in motion, on its grinding axles. We begin again the Exodus.

REGNAULT

Everything is in motion. The sky and the earth, men and the things they do. Listen to the torrent and the wind in the night, the rocks crumbling and the mountain itself wasting away bit by bit. God is on the march. He never stops. Death and Life are only the rhythm of His march.

THE PRINCE

Let us be on the march, then! . . . Behind the ramparts of the Jura, the moon, the eternal wanderer, gives us the signal.

(*Moonlight glistens on the snow between the*

pines. The Count and Manon begin the descent.)

MANON

My hand in yours, I could go with my eyes closed.

THE PRINCE

(*Taking Regnault's arm*)

Come then, Regnault, let us begin our journey.

REGNAULT

To exile.

THE PRINCE

No. To conquest. The old France and the new France, one helping the other, will spread throughout the world.

REGNAULT

I shall not go far. My old legs long for a resting place.

THE PRINCE

(*Gesturing toward the Count and Manon, descending*)

Those young legs will relieve us.

MANON

(*Turning her head without stopping*)

They will carry us through the whole world —the whole world, which is ours.

THE COUNT

The world that belongs to all.

REGNAULT

Humanity is man's natural home.

THE PRINCE

Omne solum forti patria.

(*The Prince and Regnault commence to descend. A rustic melody played on a flute, far away, is heard. Plaintive and peaceful, it seems to set the rythm for the departure.*)

VOICE OF MANON

(*Who is already invisible*)

What is that song?

VOICE OF THE COUNT

(*Invisible*)

It is the pipe of a woodcutter in the mountains.

REGNAULT

(*Raises his head to listen*)

That music . . . It seems to drift down from Heaven with the snow.

THE PRINCE

(*Whose head and shoulders are still visible; lifting his two arms toward the sky*)

The celestial caravan of the Constellations . . . It is the flute of the Charioteer, driving on. . . .

(*They disappear. The stage is empty. The flute is still heard. The wind stirs through the high branches of the forest. Snow sifts down like white blossoms from the pine trees on to the grave. A last star burns in the sky and fades out.*)

Date Due

WITHDRAWN
UNIV OF MOUNT UNION LIBRARY

WITHDRAWN
UNIV OF MOUNT UNION LIBRARY

Rolland, Romain/(Les) Teonides
3 7048 00121 6577

842.91-R749L 33088

AUTHOR
Rolland, R.

TITLE

842.91
R749l 33088